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A
S U R V E Y
OF THE
DOCTRINE and ARGUMENT
O F
St. *Peter's* EPISTLES;
WITH A
Paraphrastical EXPOSITION
O F

So much of them as may conduce to the EXPLA-
NATION of the controverted Text, 2 Epist. i. 19.

From whence it appears,

That the RIGHT REVEREND
The Lord Bishop of LONDON's Interpretation
Is the true Construction of this Passage,
Notwithstanding the Objections of the late Dr. *Middleton*,
and of the Reverend Mr. *Ashton*.

WITH
An APPENDIX relating to the Reverend
Mr. *Cooke's* Sermon.

By *JOHN WHITAKER*, M.A.

L O N D O N
Printed for WILLIAM OWEN, at *Homer's-Head*
near *Temple-Bar*.

MDCCLI.

(Price One Shilling.)



A
SURVEY
OF THE
DOCTRINE AND ARGUMENTS
OF
ST. PAUL'S EPISTLES;
IN A
PROPOSITION

TO THE
REVEREND
THE LORD BISHOP OF LONDON'S INTERPRETATION
OF THE TRUE CONSTRUCTION OF THE EPISTLES;
IN REGARDING THE OPINIONS OF THE LATE
AND OF THE REVEREND FATHER
WITH
AN APPENDIX RELATING TO THE REVEREND
MR. CROFT'S SERMON.

BY JOHN WHITTAKER, M.A.

LONDON:
Printed for WILLIAM OWEN, at HENRY'S HEAD,
near YORK-HOUSE.

(Price One Shilling)



T H E

P R E F A C E.

THE Passage of Scripture, on which the following Papers are grounded, has of late been the Subject of so much Examination, that it would be needless to offer any long Preface, to explain the Occasion or Design of them to the World. The Epistles of St. Peter are well known to have given Occasion to Variety of Interpretations. And of late the *temporal* and *spiritual* Sense have been a great Matter of Difference and Dispute. Most People, one may take for granted, have more or less employed their Thoughts upon this Subject; and in Consequence thereof, have probably embraced one Side of the Question or other. But which Way soever any Reader shall have determined upon the Case, he will in the Perusal of the following Sheets, find the Author no Enemy to his Opinion. For if any one imagines there is Reason to think the *Fate of Jerusalem* foresignified in these Prophecies, he will meet with what Arguments the Case suggested to the Author's Mind in Support of it. If, on the other Hand, any Reader should think that some Characters which are to be found therein, must probably

A 2

have

have been intended by the Apostle, to have a View to the *final Judgment*, here are no Attempts used to dispossess him of his Persuasion. But on the contrary, an Expedient is proposed, and a Way opened, whereby these different Opinions may be reconciled to each other, by the Accommodation of a *double Doctrine*. For as each Party think they have, and seem to have, many Reasons on their Side, why may they not *both* be right? Whether this Latitude of Construction be the proper Key to the Interpretation of *these Epistles*, must be left to the Judgment of the Reader. If it be a Doubt with any, whether it be agreeable to the Analogy of the *prophetic Writings in general*, I will refer him to P. 82, 83, 127, 128 and 129 of the *Bishop of London's* Discourses; 3d Chapter of *Bishop Candler's* Defence of Christianity, and *Bishop Weston's* Sermon on *John Baptist*, 2d Vol. P. 51, 52. Which Authorities may, in such Case, be of great Use to consult, previous to the Consideration of the Debate in Hand.

As to the *spiritual Doctrine* of the *final Judgment*, it has Patrons enough; the Generality of Expositors concurring in that Interpretation. But as to this Doctrine, I take for granted, it is so far from being necessary to be *defended*, that I imagine it may be thought sufficient not to *deny* it. And I am not only very far from offering any Thing to invalidate it, but am farther willing to admit, if the Compliance may be at all acceptable to any Reader, that *St. Peter* might in many Places intend this in a *secondary* and *remote* Sense. But that the *temporal* Sense, relating to the *Destruction of Jerusalem*, was in the
primary

primary and *immediate* Intention of the Apostle, seems to appear undeniably plain from the Tenor of both Epistles, compared with other Passages of Scripture, and particularly the many Predictions of our blessed Saviour himself. But as this Sense is not so generally espoused, I have, as I went along, endeavoured to support it with what Reasons occurred to me; and have, throughout the Paraphrase, construed my Author in the *temporal Sense*, where the Text would permit: At the same Time, having no Objection to the Admission of the *spiritual Doctrine* in Conjunction with it, if the Expression will bear it. But whatever *interior Sense* be allowed, a View to the *Destruction of Jerusalem* seems to be the foremost and general Doctrine of the Epistles.

The chief Obstacle, I apprehend, which has lain in the Way of this Doctrine, has been a Presumption, that it is incompatible with the spiritual Sense. But that seems, in fact, so far from being the Case, that the Admission of the temporal Sense, as it has already been signally verified and accomplished, adds the strongest Sanction imaginable to the *spiritual Doctrine*, which relates to an Event still in Futurity. "One Part, one Sense of the Prophecy being already fulfilled, is so far from weakening, that it must mightily support and strengthen our Hopes of seeing the whole fulfilled in God's own Time."

Let the Objections therefore, which may be thought to lie in the Way of this Hypothesis, be esteemed ever so great, there is a very considerable Advantage, which must necessarily be allowed

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 " already fulfilled, is so far from weakening,
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Let the Objections therefore, which may be thought to lie in the Way of this Hypothesis, be esteemed ever so great, there is a very considerable Advantage, which must necessarily be allowed

lowed it, because it cannot be denied. I mean the exact Concurrence of the very Event, supposed by this Interpretation to have been forefig-nified. Which precise Correspondence between this supposed Meaning of the Prediction, and the actual Event, which moreover *came to pass* about the very Time, when the Accomplish-ment of this Prediction was so warmly and im-patiently *expected* to come to pass, affords upon the whole so material and circumstantial a Pre-sumption, that it may be almost as easily doubted, whether our *Saviour himself* had ever any Intention of predicting this Period of the *Jewish State*.

I see not how it can be well reconciled with the general Nature of the Argument from Pro-phesy, as commonly urged in Favour of Chri-stianity, to suppose such an exact Coincidence of conspiring Circumstances, as centre in the Case before us, to be merely casual and adven-titious. Here is a warm and general Expecta-tion of an Event *before-hand*—an Event agree-able to this Expectation, within a very few Years after actually *comes to pass*—this impatient Ex-pectation is manifestly *ceased*—a Prophecy deli-vered almost *forty* Years before the Event, is al-lowed directly to foretell it—and yet another Prophecy, delivered only *six* or *seven* Years be-fore it, purposely calculated with a View to the *Expectations* then entertained by the Church, and above all, entirely agreeable to the *Event*, is supposed to have no Manner of Relation to it. Whether the *temporal* or *spiritual* Construction be better reconcileable to these Circumstances, is too plain to need determining.

But

But farther, this temporal Sense is not only thus strongly favoured and supported by these Considerations, but is at the same Time intirely *natural* and agreeable to the *Letter of the Text*; nay, plainly *necessary* to the Construction both of these Epistles of *St. Peter*, as well as many Passages in several *other* of the apostolical Writings, referred to in the following Papers. See *Phil.* iv. 5. *1 Tim.* vi. 14. *Heb.* x. 25, 37. *Jam.* v. 7, 8. compared with *1 Pet.* iv. 7, 17.

After a Perusal of which Texts, I would appeal to every Reader, whether they do not unquestionably speak of the Coming of the Lord, as a Thing near at Hand? Whether the Church at that Time, had not the highest Reason to entertain such an Expectation? And whether those Passages can be with any possible Propriety imagined to have been intended of an Event, which after the Intervention of almost seventeen hundred Years, is still in Suspence, and for ought any one knows, may be so seventeen hundred Years hence.

But on the other hand, the Construction here offered, perfectly reconciles the Doctrine of *St. Peter* with that of *St. Paul* and *St. James*, preserves and vindicates the Honour of the Apostolical Inspiration, and seems to afford the only true Answer to the dangerous Suggestion of *Grotius*, who takes Occasion from some of the Passages just mentioned, to insinuate, that the Apostles were *mistaken*. How this Objection can be removed from the *spiritual* Interpretation of these Texts, must be left to the Patrons of that Construction to consider.

I have

viii P R E F A C E.

I have only one Word more to add, which is in regard to the deceased Gentleman mentioned in the Title-Page, whose Work has been so often taken into Consideration, that I suppose it will not be thought to need any Answer now. But as this Author has laid some Bars in the Way of the Hypothesis here maintained, I imagined the Reader might expect to see them taken Notice of.

*Wrotham
in Kent.*



2 Pet.

2 Pet. i: 19.

*We have also a more sure Word of Prophecy,
whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as
unto a Light that shineth in a dark Place,
until the Day dawn, and the Day Star
arise in your Hearts.*

IN Order to come at the true Sense of which Words, as well as all other difficult Passages of Scripture, the generally approved Method of recurring to the Context and considering the Desigh of the Writer, seems to carry with it the fairest Prospect of Success. In which Pursuit there can be no more likely Method taken, than what the Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of *London* has laid down, “ of considering
“ what it is that *St. Peter* intended to prove ;
“ for that without knowing this, ’tis impossible
“ to judge of the Comparison in the Text.” Preparatory to which Consideration his Lordship observes, “ That the second Epistle of *St. Peter*
“ was written to support and maintain the
“ Hopes and Expectations which he had raised
“ in his first ; as will be evident upon a Comparison of the two together. To the first Epistle therefore we must go to see the Foundation and Rise of the Matter, to which this controverted Text in the second relates.
“ (*Discourse 1. p. 13. 5th Edition.*)” Thither therefore let us have recourse.

B

“ The

“ The principal Design of this first Epistle
 “ (says the learned Dr. *Hammond*) was to com-
 “ fort and confirm those *Jewish* Converts, who
 “ were by Persecution driven from their Homes,
 “ (*Acts* viii.) and having taken Shelter in *Judea*
 “ and *Samaria*, were at length driven farther
 “ off by the Malice and Persecutions of the
 “ obdurate *Jews*, and scattered throughout the
 “ several Places mentioned in the Apostle’s Sa-
 “ lutation, Chap. i. ver. 1. See his *Preface to*
 “ *the 1st Epistle of St. Peter*.

Dr. *Whitby*’s Opinion is somewhat different
 from this. “ He allows that it was written
 “ with a Design to encourage perseverance and
 “ Constancy under the manifold Temptations,
 “ fiery Trials and Persecutions, to which they
 “ were then exposed. But that it was written
 “ to the *Gentile* as well as *Jewish* Converts,
 “ tho’ to the *Jews* chiefly. *Whitby’s Annota-*
 “ *tion on 1 Pet. i. 1.*

The chief *Argumentation* of his Epistle the A-
 postle has disposed in the first and former Part
 of the 2d Chapter, from whence he deduces a
 great Number of excellent Exhortations to the
 Practice of the several moral-Duties, respective-
 ly becoming the several Capacities and Relations
 of Life; which take up the greatest Part of the
 remaining Chapters.

The Purport therefore of the first Chapter,
 and the Beginning of the second, will be an In-
 quiry of principal Use towards bringing us to
 the true Import of the Text under Considera-
 tion: Which seems to be to this Effect.

“ *Peter* an Apostle of *Jesus Christ*, to the
 “ Strangers scattered throughout *Pontus, Gala-*
 “ *tia, Capadocia, Asia*, and *Bitbynthia*, Chosen,
 “ according to the Fore-knowledge of God the
 “ Father



" Father through the Sanctification of the Holy
 " Ghost; to enjoy the Benefits of the Media-
 " tion (a) and Shedding of the Blood of *Jesus*
 " *Christ*; Grace and Peace be multiplied unto
 " you. Blessed be the God and Father of our
 " Lord *Jesus Christ*, who according to his great
 " Mercy hath by the Resurrection of *Jesus Christ*
 " from the Dead, again raised in you those lively
 " Hopes, which the Meanness of his Death (b)
 " might perhaps have a little damped in you; And
 " hath thereby re-established you in the Expecta-
 " tion of that incorruptible, undefiled, and never-
 " fading Inheritance, which is reserved in Heaven

(a) *ὑπακοή* seems here to mean that Readiness, whereby
 our Saviour submitted to become a Ransom for Mankind, or,
 in the Language of the Author to the *Philippians*, " became
obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Cross, ii. 8. The
 Affinity of Phrase is very observable, *ὑποτάξας ἑαυτὸν*
ὑπὸν θάνατον, &c.

I take *ὑπακοή* & *ὑποταγή* to be an Hendyadis: And
 am inclined to construe the Passage in the Sense above-given,
 because the Apostle seems therein to allude to the several
 Parts, which each Person in the Holy Trinity respectively
 bore, in the Redemption of Mankind.

But if any one should rather think, that instead of the Obe-
 dience of *Christ*, it appears a more natural Construction to
 understand the *ὑπακοή* *ὑμῶν* for Obedience to *Christ* (as it is
 used 2 *Cor.* x. 5.) the Sense will be very convenient, as the
 Apostle will in that Light seem to have an Eye to the two
 cardinal Branches of Christian Doctrine, *Faith* and *Practice*.

(b) That the Turn here given to the Argument is agreea-
 ble to the Drift and Meaning of the Apostle, and that the
 Diffidence which the Death of *Christ* had occasioned in their
 Minds, was what he aimed at the Removal of, appears plain-
 ly from the latter Part of the 11th ver. This *Jewish* Preju-
 dice concerning the Grandeur of the *Messiah's* Appearance
 was one of the greatest Obstructions to the Reception of
 Christianity amongst them; and what the Preachers of the
 Gospel are in most of their Addresses to them endeavouring
 to remove, and to reconcile them to *Christ* crucified. See
Acts iii. 18. xxvi. 22, 23.

“ for those of us, (a) Who shall persevere unto
 “ the End, and be by the Power and Grace of
 “ God kept stedfast in the Faith, to partake of
 “ that Deliverance, which is now ready to be re-
 “ vealed in this last Time; The Consumma-
 “ tion of the Jewish Polity (here called *the last*
 “ *Time*, (b) and in the 7th ver. of the 4th chap.
 “ *the End of all Things* (c) which was foretold
 “ by the Prophets, being now at Hand. In
 “ which approaching Period of Time rejoice (d);
 “ having but a little while longer to lie under
 “ the various Temptations and Afflictions, to

(a) The Apostle says *eis ἡμᾶς*, to us under the Gospel-Dispensation. See ver. 12. compared with ver. 10. From which Passage it appears, that the *spiritual* Kingdom of Christ cannot be there spoken of; for in such Case the Opposition *ex iavrois, ἡμῶν δὲ* is not true. Because the old Prophets have without doubt an Interest in *that* Kingdom, as well as those that live under the Gospel. Whatever the *σωτηρία ψυχῶν* in the 9th and 10th verse means, 'tis undeniably plain from this 12th ver. that the *old Prophets* were excluded from it. The *ἀπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων*, being evidently the same with the *σωτηρία ψυχῶν*. But that it should be the *spiritual Salvation of their Souls*, God forbid!

(b) See ver. 20. *Acts* ii. 17. 1 *John* ii. 18. 2 *Pet.* iii. 3. The Jews according to the Tradition of *Elias*, divide the Duration of the World into three Ages: The Age *before* the Law, the Age *of* the Law, and the Age *after* the Lord, or that of the *Messiah*. Dr. *Whitby* on 1 *Cor.* x. 11.

(c) See *Matt.* xxiv. 14. *Heb.* ix. 26.

(d) I here prefer the Interpretation of St. *Austin*, who thinks the Verb *ἀγαλλιάσθε* ought to be construed in an *Imperative* Sense and not *Indicatively*; as it is used *Matt.* v. 12. But if the Reader should prefer the *Indicative* Sense, the Observation of *Oecumenius*, quoted by *Estius*, *Crellius*, and *Slichtingius*, may somewhat contribute to the better Understanding of the Passage, *viz.* that the present Tense is here put for the future. According to this Interpretation, I conceive the Meaning would run thus: Which Deliverance you may depend upon it *will* bring with it great Matter of Joy and Comfort to you, altho', &c.

“ which

“ which however, (if Providence sees it neces-
 “ sary) ye may till then be exposed (a); To
 “ the End that the Trial of your Faith in the
 “ Furnace of Affliction, (which will improve it
 “ much more than Gold is improved by the
 “ Trial of Fire, which, tho’ proved ever so
 “ pure, will after all wear out and perish;) that
 “ this Trial, I say, of your Faith, may redound
 “ to your Praise, Honour and Glory at the ap-
 “ proaching Appearance of *Jesus Christ*: Whom
 “ though ye have not seen, yet ye love; as
 “ therefore ye *believe* in Him whom ye have
 “ never seen, so also by Parity of Reason re-
 “ joice, in Confidence of his Exaltation to that
 “ unspeakable Joy (b) which was set before him,
 “ whereby he is actually instated in his Glory.
 “ The Consequence and Reward (or perhaps *τελος*
 “ may here signify the Confirmation and Perfect-
 “ ing, See *Bud. Tus. and Const.* as the Verb is used
 “ *James* ii. 22.) of which Faith and Persuasion
 “ ye will soon receive by the Preservation of
 “ your Lives (c) from that Destruction, which
 “ many, endeavouring to avoid by renouncing

(a) Plainly alluding to the Consolation given them by *Christ*. *Luke* xxi. 28.

(b) See *Heb.* xiii. 2. to which Passage this seems plainly to have a Reference; where the same Word *χαρά* is used in the same Sense. It is likewise applied in the same Sense, *Matt.* xxv. 21, 23.

(c) Agreeably to our Saviour’s Prediction, *Matt.* xvi. 25. *Mark* viii. 35. *Luke* ix. 24. and xviii. 33. In all which Places ’tis worth observing that the same Words *ψύχη* and *σῶμα* are made Use of in the Original, and *ψύχη* constantly rendered *Life* and not *Soul* in our Translation. When one considers further, that the very same Phrase *σωτηρία ψυχῶν* is here used by the Apostle, and more especially when one considers the *Event*, there seems no Room to doubt, but that St. *Peter* intended an Allusion to the above-cited Prediction. See also *Mar.* iii. 4. See Note (a) on p. 12. and Note on p. 51.

" the Gospel, shall incur. Of which Deli-
 " verance let not the Sufferings and Death
 " of *Christ* make you despair; for this is the
 " very Deliverance signified by the Grace,
 " which the Prophets foretold should come
 " unto you: For after diligent Search and
 " Inquiry into the Time, which the Spirit
 " of *Christ* that was in them did fore signify,
 " it was by the same Spirit revealed unto
 " them, that not unto Themselves, but to Us of
 " these Times (*a*), upon whom the Ends of
 " the World are come 1 Cor. x. 11. were the
 " Things prophesied of to be exhibited; (*alibi* of
 " the very Day and Hour knoweth no Man, no,
 " not the Angels of Heaven, See Matt. xxiv 36,
 " Et. Mark xiii. 32) Which, agreeably to
 " their Prediction, are now again (*b*) declared
 " unto you, and reinforced by the Preachers of
 " the Gospel, who act by the Commission of
 " the same Spirit, that inspired the Prophets,
 " who first delivered the Predictions. Since
 " therefore the Spirit of God thus owns itself
 " the Author of these Prophecies, let not the
 " Sufferings of *Christ* weaken your Trust in his
 " Power and the Promise of his Coming, for
 " in reality they are the strongest Reason for
 " confirming your Faith in that Respect; be-
 " cause the very Prophecies which testified be-
 " fore-hand of his Sufferings, which ye have
 " seen already fulfilled, testified also of the Glory
 " that should follow them; which therefore ye
 " have no Reason to despair of seeing accom-

(a) See Note (a) on p. 12

(b) *Adversus reuuntio, recito. Budæus. Tufanus & Constan-*
tinus Reuuntio, Scapula.

“ *plished* (a). Wherefore keeping the Loins of
 “ your Mind always braced, and guarding a-
 “ gainst Remissness, watch and persevere unto
 “ the End (b); and let not your Hopes droop,
 “ till ye see the Grace and Deliverance which
 “ will shortly be brought you at the Appear-
 “ ance of *Jesus Christ*. Behaving in the mean
 “ time like obedient Sons, not renouncing your
 “ Faith and relapsing into those Lusts which
 “ ye formerly lived in, before ye were enlight-
 “ ened by the Gospel; but as he who hath
 “ called you to this Light of the Gospel, is
 “ holy, so be ye holy in all manner of Conver-
 “ sation, because it is written, *be ye holy, for I*
 “ *am holy*. And since (c) ye profess to call Him
 “ your God and Father, who without Respect

(a) It is worth observing how similar the Reasoning in this Place is to what the same Apostle made use of on another Occasion, *Acts* iii. 12—26. In which Passage *St. Peter* uses the very same Argument, and urges it in the same Manner. It may not be improper to premise, that instead of *Restitution of all Things*, (Ver. 21.) the original Word *ἀποκατάστασις* should be rendered *Consummation of all Things* (viz. of the Jewish Oeconomy, compare *1 Pet.* iv. 7. *Mark* xiii. 4. *Luke* xxi. 32 *Heb.* ix. 26) in which Sense *Dr. Whist* observes the Phrase is rendered by the Syriac and Arabic, as well as by *Tertullian* and *Occuminius*. And for the Confirmation of this Import of the Word the Dr. mentions the Suffrage of *Hesychius* and *Phavorinus*, that *ἀποκατάστασις* is *ῥῆσις*. To which I will only add the Testimony of *Buddæus*, *Tuscanus* and *Constantinus*, in whose Lex. the Word, amongst other Meanings, is rendered *finis seculorum*; and it immediately follows, *sic appellatur capite tertio actuum apostolicorum*. In this Passage I think the Destruction of *Jerusalem* must be allowed to be as plainly signified, as is consistent with the Nature of the prophetick Writings.

(b) Seeming to allude to *Matt.* x. 22, xxiv. 13. and *Mark* xiii. 13.

(c) PARTICULA *si non dubitantis est, sed supponentis rem notam*. *Ellius in locum*. See also *Pasor* upon the Particle *Et*. Also *Acts* iv. 9.

* of Persons, judgeth all Men according to
 “ their Actions, live agreeably to this Profes-
 “ sion; and pass the Time of your sojourning
 “ in constant Fear of incurring his Displea-
 “ sure. (a Always remembering, that your
 “ Redemption from the vain Conversation in
 “ which ye used to walk, and which ye re-
 “ ceived by Tradition from your Fathers, was
 “ not so small and unimportant a Concern, as
 “ to be purchased by corruptible and perishable
 “ Things, such as Silver and Gold; But a Re-
 “ demption purchased by the precious Blood of
 “ the immaculate *Jesus*, Who was from all Eter-
 “ nity fore-ordained by the everlasting Purpose
 “ of God, to expiate the Sins of Mankind, but
 “ was made manifest in these last Times (b) for
 “ the Sake of those of you, Who upon his Ac-
 “ count (c) do place your Faith and Expecta-
 “ tions in God, that raised him from the dead,
 “ to a State of Glory; and from the Example
 “ of *his* Resurrection, who is the First-fruits and
 “ First-begotten of the dead, do repose such a
 “ firm Trust and Reliance on God, as to be-
 “ lieve it a Pledge and Earnest of the Certainty
 “ and Security of *your own*.) And seeing that
 “ your Souls are by God’s holy Spirit purified
 “ from your former Corruptions, by having o-
 “ beyed the Truth and embraced the Gospel,
 “ and from thence learnt an undissembled Love
 “ towards the Brethren, continue to love one ano-
 “ ther with a pure Heart: Because ye are now re-
 “ generated, not of corruptible Seed according

(a) The four following Verses, according to *Estius* seem to be a Parenthesis.

(b) See Ver. 5. *I. ii. 2. Heb. i. 2. ix. 26. Acts ii. 17.*

(c) Upon his Account, either considered as the Expiator of your Sins, or the faithful Witness of the Resurrection. *Rev. i. 5.*

“ to the old Man, but of incorruptible, accord-
 “ ing to the new Man, by the Word of God,
 “ which liveth and abideth for ever. For all Flesh
 “ is as Grass, and all the Glory of Man, as the
 “ Flower of the Field. *The Grass withereth,*
 “ *and the Flower thereof falleth away: But the*
 “ *Word of the Lord endureth for ever.* And
 “ upon this eternal infallible Word depends the
 “ Authority of what is now preached unto
 “ you.”

This Chapter is the chief Part in the whole
 Epistle, that bears any great Relation to the pre-
 sent Purpose. A few of the first Verses of the
 second Chapter are to the same Effect: And as
 the Argument of them may be drawn out in a
 little Room, I am willing to take up as little of
 the Reader's Time as possible, and shall there-
 fore not trouble him with a Paraphrase, but will
 comprize it in a few Words.

In the Beginning of the Chapter the Apostle
 “ dehorts them from the Breach of Charity,
 “ seeming to imply that there had been some Divi-
 “ sions among them; as may also be conjectured
 “ from his Exhortation in the latter Part of the 22d
 “ Verse of the former Chapter: Which if there
 “ were, it seems easy to guess what Nature they
 “ were of, from the more particular Concern he
 “ discovers to preserve them stedfast in the
 “ Faith, and keep them from Apostacy; assu-
 “ ring them that if they persevered to believe in
 “ *Christ*, the chief and Foundation-Stone of the
 “ Gospel, that they should not be disappointed
 “ of their Expectations; but if their Preposses-
 “ sions against the Meanness of his Death, and
 “ their Presumptions on his Want of Power,
 “ should induce them to take Offence at and
 “ renounce the Gospel, they would certainly
 find

“ find the Prediction of *Isaiah*, mentioned *Luke* xx. 18. verified and accomplished upon them.”
For that the Stone which the Builders refused would become the Head of the Corner: And a Stone of stumbling, and a Rock of Offence to them which stumble at the Word. (a)

The only Places which seem directly to relate to the Point under Consideration, in the remaining Part of this Epistle, are Chap. iv. 7. and Ver. 17. In the former of which Passages the Apostle admonishes them, *That the End (b) of all Things is at Hand.* And Dr. *Whitby* himself allows that St. *Peter* is here speaking, not of the End of the World, but only of the End of the Jewish Church and State. (Compare *Mat. xxiv. 3, 14. Mark xiii. 4.*) And indeed the Apostle's Exhortation immediately following, *Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto Prayer,* is so similar to our Saviour's Advice upon that Occasion, *Mat. xxiv. 42, 44. Mark xiii. 35.* that it leaves it past all Doubt. The second Passage is V. 17. *The Time is come that Judgment must begin at the House of God.* Plainly alluding to the Destruction of the Temple.

(a) This Passage is so plain an Allusion to the Prophecies of *Isaiah* and *Daniel* concerning the Kingdom of the Stone, See *Dan. ii. 34, 35. Is. viii. 14, 15,* and *xxviii. 16, 17.* (which was commonly understood amongst the Jews for the Kingdom of their *Messiah*, and which our Saviour has put past all Possibility of Doubt, *Mat. xxi. 42,* and *Luke xx. 17, 18*) that I think it cannot be supposed the Apostle could pen it without having a View to the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, unless it be at the same Time supposed that St. *Peter* had never heard of our Saviour's Parable of the Vineyard, nor had ever seen St. *Matthew's* Gospel.

(b) See *Dan. xii. 9, 13. Mat. xxiv. 3, 14. Menasse de Resur. iii. 3, 5. uti jam diximus, R. Moses Gerundensis, & alii omnes sapientes per finem dierum intelligunt dies Messiae, Vid. Talm. Sanh. 11. Aben, Ezra and Kimhi on Hosea iii. Note on P. 123 of Bishop Chandler.*

Whether

Whether this State of *St. Peter's* Argument be the true one or not, must be left to the Judgment of the Reader. All I will say for it is, that there is no Part of it, but what either directly results from the Words of the Text, or is at least supported by the concurring Opinion of Commentators of the most allowed Authority. And moreover if *the Lord Bishop of London's* very judicious as well as sagacious Observation be allowed, "*That whoever reads the two Epistles, and compares them carefully, will see a manifest Concern in the second to support the Sentiments of the first,*" (*Disc. p. 24.*) as plainly appears to be the real Case; I am in great Hopes that such Comparison will be found very considerably to confirm the Exposition above given.

For if we look into the second Epistle, the Apostle will be perceived to express himself to the following Effect:

"*Simon Peter, a Servant and Apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have embraced the like precious Faith that we profess in the Justification procured us by the Mediation of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ: May you have abundant Grace and Peace in your Acknowledgment and Acceptance of this Dispensation of God, and of Jesus our Lord(a). Seeing that not only the abovementioned Communications (of Grace and Peace) but all other di-*

(a) According to *Esaius*, I think *St. Peter* has here finished his Period, agreeable to the Form of Salutation in his first Epistle; and that the two following Verses should not conclude the next Period, for the Sense seems there to be still depending; the 5th, 6th and 7th Verses plainly constituting the Remainder of the Sentence, and being manifestly necessary to supply the *Asyndeton*, which 'tis very difficult to supply without them.

“ vine Influences (for all Things pertaining to
 “ Life and Holiness are derived from his divine
 “ Power (a) are conferred upon us on account
 “ of our Profession and Acknowledgment of
 “ him that called us and reconciled us by Virtue
 “ of the Dignity of his Character, the Glory (b)
 “ which he had with the Father before the
 “ World was, and his eminent Favour (c) with
 God:

(a) There is scarce any Passage in the New Testament, that has been charged with the Imputation of more Perplexity than this. And accordingly Dr. Mill says, that its Obscurity has been the Occasion of such a Number of various Readings. But putting a Comma after *quoniam*, and supposing the Verb *est* to be understood (which is a very common Ellipsis) *dominus* will then be put absolute with *diducimus*, and the Passage, I think, by the Help of the foregoing Observation of *Ellius*, thereby free of all Difficulty. I should translate it thus: *Sicut omnia nobis sunt (divinâ illius virtute quæ ad vitam & pietatem pertinent suppeditante, in the Greek having given) per agnitionem illius qui vocavit nos ab gloriâ & gratiam, quæ apud patrem habuit, &c. Ad hoc ipsum animos impense intendentes, præstate in fide vestrâ virtutem, &c.* As to the active Signification here given to the passive Participle *diducimus*, and making it govern an Accusative Case, the Liberty is not only warranted by our English Translators, as well as most others, but is an Atticism of very familiar Use amongst the Writers of the New Testament. See *Pasor de Græcis novi Testamenti dialectis*. See also *Act. xviii. 25. xxi. 3. 1 Cor. ix. 17. Col. i. 9.* in all which places passive Verbs govern Accusative Cases. See also *2 Tim. iv. 7*, which Passage is exactly parallel to the Case in Hand: for the passive Verb *trihimus* not only governs the Accusative *ayvna*, but is also used in an active Signification.

If this Exposition should not prove satisfactory, I shall, however, presume to hope for the Pardon of the Learned, who are acquainted with the Difficulties which Commentators are under, to make tolerable Sense of this Place. There is this to be said for it, it preserves and vindicates the common Reading, and, *cæteris paribus*, some Degree of Regard is usually thought due to such Interpretations, in Preference to those which reject it.

(b) Seeming to have a View to *John xvii. 5*.

(c) It must be owned that the usual Signification of the Word

“ God : (Whereby are given to us exceeding
 “ precious Promises, insomuch that by them ye
 “ may become Partakers of the divine Nature,
 “ provided ye keep yourselves free from the
 “ Corruption which is in the World thro’ Lust :)
 “ Applying yourselves therefore with all Dili-
 “ gence to this very thing^(a), add to your Faith
 “ Virtue, and to Virtue Knowledge, And to
 “ Knowledge Temperance, and to Temperance
 “ Patience, and to Patience Godliness, And to
 “ Godliness brotherly Kindness, and to brother-
 “ ly Kindness Charity. For these Things, if
 “ they be in you, especially if they abound in
 “ you, will keep you from being either sloth-
 “ ful or unfruitful in the Profession of our Lord
 “ Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these
 “ Things, is blind, not able to look into Fu-
 “ turity, nor to see any Thing but what is im-
 “ mediately before his Eyes, forgetting that he
 “ has been cleansed from those Sins which he
 “ used to live in before his Conversion to Christ.

Word *ἁγισμὸς* in the New Testament is *moral Virtue*. But the
 Acceptation above given certainly reflects a much stronger
 Light upon this Passage ; and the following Considerations
 will, I hope, evince, that it is a very justifiable Construction.
 According to *Scapula*, dicitur *ἁγισμὸς* (inter alia Etyma) *ωσαύ-
 τὸ ἁγιον, ἢ ὡσαύτῃ ἁγιονοῦσα*. Idem sonat apud *Budæi, Tu-
 sani & Constantini Lex*. And when one compares this Pas-
 sage with *Mat. xii. 18. Ἰδοὺ ὁ καιρὸς καὶ ἡ ἡΠΕΤΙΣΤΑ*, the
 Alliance and Affinity between the Noun and the Verb, seem
 not only to afford a pretty strong presumptive Argument,
 that this was the Apostle’s Meaning, but likewise support a
 great Probability that he intended an Allusion to this very
 Passage of the Evangelist. The King’s Manuscript strongly
 favours this Interpretation, for instead of *διὰ δόξης καὶ ἀγνῶσεως*,
 according to the common Lesson, the *Alexandrian* reads
ἰδίᾳ δόξῃ καὶ ἀγνῶσει.

(a) The Lesson of *Oecumenius*, *εἰς αὐτὸ τῆτο*, makes the
 Sense plainer than the common Reading καὶ αὐτὸ τῆτο.

Where

“ Wherefore, Brethren, take so much the more
 “ Care to preserve your Calling and Election
 “ sure; for as long as ye live in the Practice of
 “ the above-mentioned Virtues, ye will never
 “ stagger in your Faith: For by these Means an
 “ Entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord
 “ and Saviour Jesus Christ will be abundantly
 “ secured to you. Wherefore I shall never neg-
 “ lect to put you in mind of these Things, tho’
 “ ye have known (a) them, and have been esta-
 “ blished in the Truth I am speaking of. But
 “ notwithstanding that, I shall always think it
 “ right to stir up your Memories, as long as I
 “ continue amongst you in this earthly Taber-
 “ nacle; Knowing that the Time is but short
 “ before I shall put it off, according as our
 “ Lord Jesus Christ has revealed unto me. I
 “ will therefore take care, that after my Disso-
 “ lution, ye may at any Time have the Op-
 “ portunity of consulting what I have said; not
 “ at all unwilling, that ye should keep in Mind
 “ the Things I have told you, or in the least
 “ fearful of their Accomplishment and Event.
 “ For we did not follow sophistical or delusive
 “ Fables, when we assured you of the Power
 “ and Coming (b) of our Lord Jesus Christ,
 but

(a) *Erasmus*, the preterfect Tense, rendered right, *Jude* 3.

(b) If it be doubted whether the Coming here spoken of be meant of his second Coming to the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, or his final Coming to judge the *World*, I see no Inconvenience in answering, that *St. Peter* might possibly have an Eye to both. But that it was the former, which was then expected to happen in a short Time, I should imagine would evidently appear from a due Consideration of *Matt.*

“ but we ourselves were Eye-witnesses of his
 “ Majesty and Power ; For he received from
 “ God the Father Honour and Glory, by
 “ a Voice which came from the bright and mag-
 “ nificent Glory that surrounded him, saying,
 “ This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well
 “ pleased. And this Voice we ourselves heard
 “ as it came from Heaven, being at the same

xxiv. 3. *Luke ix. 26.* together with the Context of each, and
James v. 7, 8. which Passages I apprehend will go a great
 Way with an impartial Inquirer towards settling the Point.
 But to omit many Reasons, which cannot but occur to every
 one upon a Perusal of these 2 Epistles, compared with many
 Passages in the evangelical Writings, which are undeniably
 relative to the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, I will trouble the
 Reader with one of another Nature. It is this : The gener-
 al Expectation of a *Messiah* about the Time when *Jesus Christ*
 appeared, and no other Person appearing capable of support-
 ing any Pretensions to that Character, is generally urged as
 an Argument in Favour of the *Messiahship* of our Saviour ;
 and a very good Argument it certainly is. So in the present
 Case : The warm and impatient Expectations, that were en-
 tertained by the Christians about this Time, concerning the
 speedy Coming of *Christ*, render it very probable that there
 was some Foundation for such a Presumption. For if there
 were no Assurances given them to this Purpose, whence
 came such an Expectation ? If this Expectation regarded his
final Coming at the *Day of Judgment*, how happens it that
We, who are so many Centuries nearer to this Period, should
 yet entertain no such sanguine Persuasions of that approach-
 ing Time ? The nearer People approach to any expected
 Time, the Warmer do their Expectations generally grow.
 Supposing on the other Hand, that it was the *second* Coming
 of *Christ* to the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, which was so im-
 patiently looked for in *St. Peter's* Time, the Accomplish-
 ment of that Event in a very few years after, not only ren-
 ders such their Expectation very natural, but also Accounts
 for the Remission of that Expectation in the succeeding Ages
 of the Church. Which Remission certainly must induce one
 to think, that those Expectations had been answered by the
 Event expected.

Time

“ Time with him on the holy Mount. We
 “ have also a more sure (a) Word of Prophe-
 cy

(a) A late ingenious Writer has set this Passage in quite a new Light, representing the Comparative *βεβαιωτος* as bearing no Relation to any Antecedent *expressed*; but that the Apostle calls the Word of Prophecy concerning the future Kingdom of *Christ* *most sure* than ever it was, because it was better explained since the Coming of *Christ*, and consequently better understood. Mr. *Ashton* has explained himself in the following Paraphrase of the Apostle's Words.

“ Your Argument from Prophecy is by this Means;
 “ (*viz.* by having been explained by the Holy Ghost) *stronger*
 “ than ever it was: Your Prophecies are now become a *surer*
 “ Guide to you, because you *understand* them better: You were
 “ liable to many Mistakes and Disappointments, when you were
 “ left to your *own Conjectures* about the Intent of them: You
 “ can now be liable to none, since *God himself* has been pleased
 “ to explain to you their Intent.” Mr. *A's* Dissertation,
 “ p. 152.

But whatever Reasons may seem to countenance this Construction, St. *Peter* himself, I apprehend, will scarce agree to this Interpretation of his Meaning, as the Context seems strongly to remonstrate against it. *We have also*, says the Apostle, *a more sure Word of Prophecy, whereunto ye do well; that ye take heed, as unto a Light that shineth in a dark Place, until the Day dawn, and the Day-Star arise in your Hearts.* Now had he intended that the *more sure Word of Prophecy* should have been understood in the Sense contended for by this Author, it seems not very likely that he would have explained himself, as he does in the following Part of the Verse. For can it be thought that the Apostle would have denied the Word of Prophecy, the Advantage of so slender a Metaphor as that of *Twilight*, if his Argument had been intended to turn upon any extraordinary Illustration, which Prophecy had lately received from the Explanations and Dilucidations of the Holy Ghost? On the other Hand, as far as appears, it was in full as involved a State as ever it was; not having yet received the dim Eclaircissement of even a *crepuscular Dawn*. For he exhorts them to attend to it, as unto a Light shining in a dark Place *until* the Day dawn, and the Day Star should arise in their Hearts. And so Mr. *A.* himself is forced to explain it, when he comes to prepare his Argument and shape his Interpretation,

“cy (a); whereunto ye do well that at-
 “tend, as unto a Light shining in a dark
 “Place (b), until the Day dawn, and the
 Day

tion in Order to make it consistent with the latter Part of the Verse. His Words are ; “ You see these Things now
 “ only as it were thro’ a Glass darkly, and at a Distance :
 “ Enough to discover the Reality of their *Existence*, too
 “ indistinctly to form any precise Notion of the *Manner* of
 “ it; you see they *are* ; you see not *what* they are.” p. 157.
 But to what Purpose then were those Things better *ex-
 plained*? or in what Sense could they be better *understood*
 than they were before? or how was the *Nature* of that
 Kingdom made known to them, as this Author supposes
 P. 153?

(a) That this Word of Prophecy was a *Gospel Evidence*,
 if not *exclusively*, yet at least in *Conjunction* with the Predic-
 tions of the *Old Testament* : Or, in other Words, that St.
Peter here alludes to the Declarations of *Christ* himself or
 his Apostles, if not *solely*, yet at least in *great Measure*, is
 pretty plain from the Language of the Objectors, *where is
 the Promise of his Coming?* A Way of Speaking, which
 they would scarce have made use of, had they only had in
 View some bare Prediction of the old Prophets. On the o-
 ther hand, the Expression seems to convey the Idea of
 something *personally* expected from the Author of the Pro-
 phesy *himself* : Or at least looks like a Cavil objected a-
 gainst some People, *then living*, that had given Occasion
 for such an Expectation. See Note (b) on p. 14.

(b) As Man has not the Faculty of Prescience, Futurity
 is in Regard to us very properly here expressed by the me-
 taphorical Phrase of a *dark Place*. And when God vouch-
 safes to give us any Notices of what is to come, the Meta-
 phor is well carried on, by representing such a Revelation,
 as a *Light shining in that dark Place*. When such Prophe-
 cies begin to open, to draw near to their Completion, and
 to be better understood, then the *Night* is said to be *far
 spent*, and the *Day* to be at Hand, according to St. Paul,
Rom. xiii. 12. Or in the Language of our Apostle, *the Day
 begins to dawn; and the Day Star to arise*. When the Event
 is come to pass, and the Prediction verified by its Accom-
 plishment, then in the Scripture Stile it is called *the perfect
 Day*

“ Day-Star arise in your Hearts (a). Remem-
 “ bering this material Consideration, that no
 “ Prophecy of the Scripture (b) is the Dictate of
 any

Day. Thus all the Prophecies of the Old Testament centring in our Saviour, he is called the *Sun* of Righteousness, a burning and a shining *Light*. For the same Reason, the Gospel is called the *Day-spring* and a marvellous *Light*.

This shews sufficient Reason, why the *accomplished* Predictions concerning the Gospel, are compared to *broad Day-Light* and *Sun shine*; and at the same Time how *unfulfilled* Prophecy is fitly compared to a *Light* shining in a *dark Place*. Yesterday I was infallibly assured, that such an Event would come to pass to day; it is come to pass, and the Accomplishment of the Prediction manifest. “ Whatsoever doth
 “ make manifest is *Light* :” The Prophecy therefore thus verified may be said to be as clear as the *Sun at Noon Day*. Again, I am assured by the same infallible Authority, that another Event will happen *To-morrow*. To-morrow is to me a *dark Place*; the Prophecy therefore is a *Light* shining in a *dark Place*. Nor do I at all detract from such a Prophecy by calling it so: For I at the same Time allow its Authority to be unquestionable. See the Bishop of London’s Disc. p. 7th, 8th, 9th, 13th and 22d compared with Dr. M’s Exposition, P. 58—66.

(a) By the *Day-dawn* and the *Day-star* I apprehend St. Peter alludes to the Prognostics which our Saviour had told them should precede the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, Luke xxi.

(b) Upon this Passage Dr. Middleton observes, that it is a Point allowed and indisputable, that wherever the Writers of the New Testament speak of *Scripture* in general, or of the Prophecies of the Scripture, they must be understood to speak only of the *Old Testament*, and the Prophecies therein recorded. Examination, P. 81. In the first Place, this Observation does not seem to be true; as appears from 2 Pet. iii. 16. *other Scriptures*. But supposing it were true, yet of what Service it will be to the Dr’s Hypothesis, the 52d Page of these Papers will explain. Where in summing up the State of the Apostle’s Argument, it is shewn from Ver. 10, 11, and 12 of the first Chapter of the first Epistle, how St. Peter had established a Connection between the *Old*
 and

" any Man's own Mind (a). For Prophecy never

and New Covenant, proved that they were both directed by the same Spirit of God, and consequently that the inspired Men under both Dispensations were upon the same Foot of Authority. If therefore the Prophecies of the Old Testament were all inspired by the Holy Ghost; as the old and new Covenant proceeded from, and were directed by the same Author, the same Infallibility must of consequence attend the Prophecies under the New Testament. Supposing therefore that the Word *Scripture* here is meant of the Old Testament, and supposing farther the Word *word* rightly translated of *old*; yet these Things by no means confine the Word of Prophecy in the 19th V. to the Old Testament Prophecy: So far from it, that it does not appear, nor as I conceive can it be proved, that the Word of Prophecy there spoken of, must necessarily be limited and restrained to any written Word of Prophecy only. What Impropriety then can there be in supposing, that St. Peter might at the 19th V. allude to the Prophecies of our Saviour and his Apostles (whether they were written or unwritten it matters not) as well as to the Predictions of the old Prophets: For the foregoing Considerations have, I hope, made it plain that the Apostle's Reasoning at the 20 and 21 Verses is equally strong and pertinent upon this Supposition, as if that Word of Prophecy were confined to the Predictions of the Old Testament only. See Mr. A's Dissertation, P 143.

(a) *Ἐπίδωκε* according to Phavorinus and Suidas, is *ἰφόδος*, *accessus*: According to Budæus, Tusanus, and Constantinus, *impetus*, *ἰφόδος*, *insultus*, *aggressio*. This Sense Hammond and Whitby follow. See also Pool's Synop. in locum. But if notwithstanding these Authorities the Reader should prefer the English Translation, and should think *Interpretatio* the more natural Signification of the Word *ἰφίδωκε*, it shall not be disputed. For the Argument will stand just the same, and the Sense amount to the very same Thing. For according to this Construction, the meaning of the Passage will be as Dr Mill has explained it, *Scriptura prophetica non explicabat seu interpretabatur sensum ipsius prophetæ; sed spiritus sancti, quo afflatus est, mentem atque sententiam*. Mill in locum. But to make it signify the Interpretation of a Prophecy already delivered, is plainly repugnant to the Apostle's own

“ ver came at any Time (a) by the Will of
 “ Man, but holy Men of God always spake
 “ as they were inspired by the Holy Ghost.”

As the Text now under Consideration is contained in this first Chapter, and therefore what we have the most immediate Concern with, I was in Hopes I might, in some Measure, plead an Excuse for the Prolixity of a Paraphrase, in Order to set the Context in as clear a Light as I could. The two remaining ones shall be made less tedious to the Reader, by having the Argument of them drawn out in as little a Compass as possible.

“ In the second Chapter the Apostle proceeds
 “ from the Example of the past Times to shew,
 “ that there should in like Manner amongst
 “ them be false Teachers, who should introduce
 “ damnable Heresies, and by denying the Lord
 “ that bought them, would bring upon them-

Argument; because in that Sense the Reason given in the following Verse, whereby he supports his Assertion, is not to the Purpose. For he says not, that Prophecy was never *explained* by the Will of Man, which in this Case he ought to have said, but that Prophecy never *came*, *ἤλθεν*, was never *brought* or *given* by the Will of Man. But if we take it for the *original Delivery* of Prophecy, the Reason follows closely and pertinently. Compare this Passage with Ezek. xiii. 2, 3. 2 Tim. iii. 16. 1 Pet. i. 11. See Mr. *Ashton's* Dissertation, p. 148. 152, 153.

(a) So it is translated in the Margin of our *English* Bibles, and this Translation is supported by much ampler Authority, than that of the Text. For *Aliquando* and not *Olim* is by far the more usual Signification of the Word *Ποτε*, inasmuch that several Lexicons take no Notice of its ever signifying *Olim* at all. There are Instances enough however in the New Testament of its use in both Senses.

“ selves

“ selves swift (a) Destruction: (See *Mat. xvi.*
 “ 25.) And by traducing many from the Pu-
 “ rity of the Gospel to their pernicious Doc-
 “ trines, the Way of Truth would thereby be
 “ evil spoken of. But such Deceivers he as-
 “ sures, that for a long Time their Judgment
 “ had been decreed; and, let them think what
 “ they would of the Slowness of the Lord’s com-
 “ ing, their Damnation however did not lin-
 “ ger. He then proceeds from several Prece-
 “ dents of Punishment inflicted upon the De-
 “ linquents of Antiquity, and the visible Protec-
 “ tion of the Righteous from the general Cala-
 “ mities, to infer, that the Lord will always,
 “ in like Manner, deliver the Godly out of
 “ Danger, and bring the Unjust to condign
 “ Punishment. And, in short, after describing
 “ the Practices and setting a Mark of Infamy
 “ upon the Seducers of those Times, with a
 “ Sort of religious Vehemence and Warmth,
 “ he assures them, that their Case is much
 “ worse, by having apostatized from the Way
 “ of Truth, than if they had never known it.
 “ In the 3d Chapter the Apostle tells them,
 “ that he sent them this second Epistle for the
 “ same Reason that he did the first, viz. To
 “ remind them not to forget the Predictions of
 “ the holy Prophets, and the Precepts of him-
 “ self and the rest of the Apostles. Above all,
 “ bidding them take particular Notice, that the
 “ Holy Ghost had foretold that such Scoffers and
 “ Impostors should come in the latter Times, (b)

(a) I imagine nobody will dispute, whether this Expres-
 sion be more compatible with the *final Day of Judgment*, or
 with the *Destruction of Jerusalem*.

(b) See Note (b) on p. 12.

“ reproachfully asking, *Where is the Pro-*
 “ *mise of his Coming? For that except (a) the*
 “ *Deaths and Successions of Men, all Things have*
 “ *continued the same from the Creation. But,*
 “ says he, those Men do not consider surely,
 “ that those very Heavens and that Earth, by
 “ the Confluence of whose Waters the old
 “ World was drowned, originally owed their
 “ Being to the Word of God, and therefore act-
 “ ed by the Commission of that Word: And
 “ moreover that by the Decree of the same
 “ Word, the present Heavens and Earth are
 “ reserved against the Day of Judgment and
 “ Perdition of the wicked, to be then burnt.
 “ Another Thing he particularly recommends
 “ to their Consideration, is, that one Day is
 “ with the Lord as a thousand Years, and a
 “ thousand Years, as one Day. And he farther
 “ tells them, that the Lord is not slack concern-
 “ ing his PROMISE (b) (as some Men imagine)
 “ but only out of his great Mercy and Kindness
 “ to the Jews (c), allowed them Time to weigh
 “ the Evidences of the Gospel; not willing that
 “ any of them should perish, but that they
 “ should be all brought to Conversion (d). *The*
 “ *Day of the Lord, continues the Apostle, will*
 “ *come as a Thief in the Night, in which the*
 “ *Heavens shall pass away with a great Noise (e),*
 “ and

(a) Αφ' ἧς. See this Interpretation well supported by Dr. Hammond in locum. See also Archbishop Tillotson Ser. 2.

(b) See Note (a) on p. 25.

(c) The Apostle says Ἰουδαῖς, as being himself a Jew.

(d) Gr. Μετάνοιαν.

(e) Ποῖζνδν also signifies *swiftly*. Accordingly the Vulgate Latin has expressed it by *magno impetu, with great Rapidity*. It has been by many observed, that this latter Construction preserves the Force of the Comparison much better:

“ and the Elements shall melt with fervent Heat ;
 “ the Earth also, and the Works that are there-
 “ in, shall be burnt up. Seeing then that all these
 “ Things shall be dissolved, what Manner of Per-
 “ sons ought ye to be in all holy Conversation and
 “ Godliness, looking for and hasting unto the
 “ Coming of the Day of God, wherein the Hea-
 “ vens being on Fire shall be dissolved, and the
 “ Elements shall melt with fervent Heat ? Ne-
 “ vertheless we, according to his Promise, look
 “ for new Heavens and a new Earth, wherein
 “ dwelleth Righteousness. Upon this he sub-
 “ joins another Exhortation, wherein he per-
 “ suades them to continue looking for such
 “ Things, and to take great Care, that they
 “ might be found of Christ in Peace, without
 “ Spot and Blameless : And account the Long-
 “ suffering of the Lord to be Salvation ; even
 “ as his Fellow-apostle *Paul* also, according to
 “ the Wisdom given unto him, had written un-
 “ to them ; as well as in all his other Epistles,
 “ speaking in them of those Doctrines (a) : In
 “ which were some Things hard to be un-
 “ derstood, which they that were unlearned
 “ and unstable wrested, as they did also the
 “ other Scriptures to their own Destruction. He
 “ then adds a final Exhortation, that seeing they
 “ had been foretold of these Things, they should
 “ beware, lest they also, being led away by the
 “ Error of the wicked, fall from their own
 “ Stedfastness : Admonishing them to grow in
 “ Grace, and in the Knowledge of our Lord

ter : *Swiftness* being more applicable to a Thief than *Noise*.

(a) Εἰ οἷς, which therefore is not to be understood to agree with *ἡμετέρας*, a Feminine Noun, but with *τῶν*.

“ and Saviour Jesus Christ ; to whom be ascribed Glory both now and for ever. *Amen.*”

In the 10, 11, 12, and 13th Verses, I have not ventured to use any synonymous Expressions or Paraphrase, but have kept to the bare Letter of our English Translation : Because I was willing that so material a passage should stand in its full Force, and therefore purposely declined dressing it in any Language of my own, in Order to stand clear of the Imputation of any sinister Gloss or designing Comment. For amongst a number of Passages, which strongly evince, that the appearing of Jesus Christ so often mentioned, was meant of his coming to execute Vengeance upon the unbelieving *Jews*, they alone throughout the two Epistles, contain any Resemblance of an Objection to it. So strong an Objection indeed do they contain, that upon the Strength of their Evidence Dr. *Whitby* insists, that the main Doctrine urged and inculcated throughout the Epistle, is the *spiritual* Coming of Christ at the last Day ; all his Reasons against a *temporal* Sense being built upon these very Verses (*a*) ; (excepting a little Notice taken of *Ver.* 8. which is so neutral a Passage, that no great Stress can be laid upon it either Way.) And indeed it must be owned, that the Letter of the Text is undeniably strong in favour of the *Day of Judgment*. On the other Hand, Dr. *Hammond*, with a great deal of Learning, and it must be confessed, some Countenance from the Stile of the *Jewish* Prophets, has

(*a*) See his Preface to the second Epistle.

explained away the literal Meaning, in Order to make it compatible with the *temporal* Destruction soon after brought upon *Jerusalem*. And it must be further owned, that St. *Peter* manifestly alludes therein to several Passages in the Old Prophets, which have been generally interpreted in a figurative Sense. 'Tis plain, however, every Body does not acquiesce in his Interpretation: And it cannot be denied, that if it be allowed to be figurative, the Expressions are many of them extremely hyperbolical and lofty. On this Account, many have been induced to embrace *Whitby's* Opinion, though they allow that the preceding Parts of both Epistles apparently countenance the opposite Interpretation. If I might be indulged a Conjecture, the Case seems to have been thus: The visible Aspect of a *temporal* Sense, which discovers itself through the first and almost all the second Epistle, seems to have induced Dr. *Hammond* to explain away the literal Meaning of the four abovementioned Verses, in Order to make it consistent with the general Tenor of the whole. On the other Hand, the plain Vestigia of Allusion to the *final Day of Judgment*, which those four Verses incontestably afford, and which he probably might think too strong to be evaded, inclined Dr. *Whitby* to conclude, that the Turn of both Epistles was intended to point that Way.

If so, I will presume to offer an Expedient, whereby I should think the Difference might be easily accommodated, and both the Commentators reconciled to the same Interpretation. What the learned *Author* of the *Discourses* has observed upon the Prophecies of the Old Testament, will

will very advantageously prepare the Reader for what I mean. "Many of the antient Prophecies (says this eminent and ablest of Writers) relate to both Covenants; and hence it comes to pass, that at the first Appearance many of the antient Predictions seem to be hardly consistent with themselves, but to be made up of Ideas, which can never unite in one Person, or in one Event. Thus the Promises to *David* of a Son to succeed in his Throne, have some Circumstances, which are applicable only to *Solomon* and the temporal Dominion over the House of *Israel*; some which are peculiar to that Son of *David*, who was Heir of an everlasting Kingdom, which was to be establish'd in Truth and Righteousness. Hence it is, that we often find the Promises of temporal Felicity, or temporal Deliverances raised so high, that no temporal Felicity, or temporal Deliverance can answer the Description; the Thoughts and Expressions of the Prophet naturally moving from the Blessings of one Covenant to the Blessings of the other." Bishop of *London's* Discourses, p. 128.

Such being undoubtedly the Case in Regard to the Prophecies of the *Old Testament*, it can be thought no unallowable Extent of Analogy, by the same Ratio to explain the manifest Similarity of Genius, that discovers itself in the prophetick Stile of the *New Testament*. (a)

With

(a) In the same Manner, if any Expressions should occur in the former Epistle, which may seem too high for the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, there is no Reason to conclude from thence, that no others were intended to refer to it. The most material Passage that can be urged against

With this View therefore, let us look into the context. Whoever, the least conversant in the prophetick Writings, reads over the first Epistle, I am persuaded must allow, that if St. Peter had thereby intended to have foretold, that the Coming of Christ would be in a short Time, he would have had no Occasion to have spoken of it in plainer Terms. And whoever considers the Purport of his second Epistle, cannot but conclude, that the Apostle had in his former Letter expressed himself plain enough upon the occasion for those he wrote to. So far did they seem from *not understanding* him to have foresignified the coming of Christ in a short Time, that many of them thereby became *too eager* in their Expectations of it. So very eager, that many had taken an Occasion to make a Mock at the Prophecy, and to ridicule the Notion of his coming at all, because he had not appeared within so short a Space of Time, even as five or six Years. The Insinuations of these Scoffers may naturally be imagined, to have had Weight enough with weak Minds in a Time of violent Persecution, to have unsettled the Faith of many, and not unlikely to

against the Hypothesis here offered throughout the whole Epistle, is Ch. iv. 5. "Οἱ ἀποδώσουσι λόγον τῷ ἑτοίμῳ ἔχειν κρίνας ζῶντας, καὶ νεκροίς. Which in our Translation sounds, as if the Day of Judgment *was near at Hand*. But the Phrase *ἑτοίμῳ ἔχειν* seems to bear no Sort of Relation to *Time*, but only to signify *paratus sum*, to be in such Sense *ready*, prepared with Power and Commission for that Purpose; agreeably to the usual Meaning of the Expression. See *Suidas*, *Scapula*, *Budeus*, *Tusannus* and *Constantinus*. In the same Sense *ἑτοίμη ἀποκαλύψαναι*, 1st Epistle i. 5, is to be understood; only with this Difference, that *there* the Time is specified by the Words immediately following, viz. *ἐν καιρῷ ἑρχάτω*; in this Place the Expression is left at large.

have

have induced some intirely to renounce the Gospel. In such Case, it would be very reasonable to imagine, that in his second Epistle to them, he would make it his Business to conduct his Argument in such wise, as to *re-settle* the Wavering in the Stedfastness of their Faith, to *confute* the Scoffers, and *deter* others from spreading such poisonous Insinuations, by threatening the Authors of them with that Vengeance, which was due to such pernicious Heresies. The two first of these Points are directly and amply executed in the first Chapter; as the third is very apparently the Subject of the two remaining Chapters. In the Management of which Point, let us take Notice how the Apostle proceeds. Let it then be observ'd, that the main Drift and Purpose of the two last Chapters, is the Denunciation of Destruction and Vengeance against those that bring in damnable Heresies, to subvert the Faith and seduce the Professors of it. On the Proof of which Article, the Apostle enters at the 4th Verse of the 2d Chapter, by producing several remarkable Precedents of *Punishment*, that had been inflicted upon the Sons of Disobedienee, and, in Order to confirm the Faithful in their Integrity, shews how the Righteous had at the same Time been *protected* by Heaven. The Application of the Inference from which Precedents, to the approaching Appearance of Jesus Christ, was very easy and obvious; and plainly implied in the 9th Verse. I say, *implied*: For though *ἡμεῖς κρίσεως* may be easily construed in that Sense, yet the Latitude of the Expression leaves it not *necessarily* confined

fin'd to that Construction ; it being also capable of meaning the *final Day of Judgment*. This indeed, of all others, seems at first Sight to be the very Place, where St. *Peter* might be expected to have used some Expression or other, *peculiarly* applicable to this Coming of Christ, if he had meant it of the Destruction of *Jerusalem*. But for the Removal of this seeming Objection, let it be remembred, that the Proposition, which St. *Peter* was proving, was levelled against those Scoffers that derided and *believed not* his approaching Coming (a). Menaces therefore from that Quarter, would have been to no Purpose. An Argument from that Topick would be nothing more than beating the Air. If therefore, the Apostle should be found to have backed this Doctrine by an Argument from the *grand Day of Judgment*, would not every one allow it to be extremely a propos ? Would not the Force of his Reasoning be admirably clinched by it, and his Argument very emphatically strengthened thereby ?

This indeed, was the real and only Reason, that induced me to subscribe to the literal Meaning of this latter Part of the third Chapter, after reading the Arguments for its metaphorical Acceptation ; because the literal Sense of the Day of Judgment, adds so much Strength and Energy to the Apostle's Reasoning, and because the Argument seems somewhat deficient without it. Besides, as Mr. *Collyer* says, “ Since the Apostle speaks of the Destruction of the Old World by *Water* in a *literal* Sense, in like Manner he seems to speak of the Heavens or Elements, and the Earth by

(a) As appears from *Ch. iii. Ver. 4.*

“ *Fire*

“ *Fire in a literal Sense*” (a). Admitting this Hypothesis, what can have the Appearance of more Propriety ? The Point the Apostle is now upon, as was observed before, is the Danger and Punishment of introducing damnable Heresies, and seducing the Believers from the Faith. This Point was to be made good for the Conviction and Conversion of some Christians, that embraced the Gospel-Doctrines *in general*, but who derided the Doctrine of Christ’s *approaching Coming* (b). Which approaching Coming the

(a) Sacred Interpreter. p. 294.

(b) In Opposition to this, Dr. Middleton asserts, that the Proof of the Messiahship of Christ, or the Gospel-Doctrines *in general*, was the Design of both Epistles. See his Examination, p. 74, 75, 76. which Opinion he builds upon the following Argument. He takes the Antecedent for granted, that the *Jewish* Converts doubted the Doctrine of Christ’s Coming ; and from thence argues, that they must consequently doubt of *all* the Gospel Facts and Doctrines. (See Examination, p. 77, 91.) How such a Conclusion would follow supposing the Antecedent to be *admitted*, I shall not here enquire : The Antecedent itself not only *wanting*, but as far as appears, being *incapable* of Proof : But which the Doctor lays down as a presumed Position, which is necessarily maintained by the Patrons of this Opinion. A Position, however, not at all necessary to, or any Part of the Hypothesis here defended. For in the first Place, it is undeniably plain, from various Passages in both the Epistles, that these Converts did not disbelieve the Gospel-Doctrines *in general*, nor, further, does it at all appear, that they even so much as doubted the Truth of the *particular* Doctrine of Christ’s Coming : For they might be disappointed and uneasy, because he was not *already* come. ’Tis plain, they lived in constant Expectation of it. And therefore if they had no Assurance of his coming in a *short Time*, it is very easy to imagine, that in a Time of raging Persecution, a great many might be induced to renounce the Gospel for the Sake of Safety, tho’ they did not doubt the Truth of its Doctrines ; and which perhaps nothing but the Dread of Death could have made them forsake.

the Apostle insisted upon, as resting on the Word of Prophecy. In this Case, he puts them in Mind, as was very natural, that if the Doctrine of Christ's approaching Coming *should* prove true, they might expect to be the particular Objects of his Vengeance. But as this his Coming in a short Time was what they doubted of, he does not trust to the Strength of that Head only, but fetches another Argument from the Consideration of a Topick which they *did* believe, *viz.* The final Judgment; and which therefore might be expected to have some Hold upon them. In effecting which,

forfake. For the Prospect of Death may very often stagger a Man's Reason and Faith too; and the Passion of Fear frequently prompts People to act contrary to the Conviction of their Conscience. Many a Man might not have Resolution enough to *lay down his Life* for Christ, and yet at the same Time might not *disbelieve* any Article of his Gospel. Hence therefore, appears the Reason, why the Apostle should be particularly studious of confirming them in the Persuasion of Christ's *approaching* Appearance, because at his Coming, they expected a Deliverance from Persecution and Danger. This therefore would be the most effectual Way to keep them stedfast in the Faith.

Here is so far then from being any Ground for supposing that they doubted of *all* the Gospel-Doctrines in general, that there appears no Necessity for supposing, that they disputed even the *particular* Doctrine of Christ's Coming: For their Instability might only arise from their Diffidence and Doubts concerning the *Nearness* of his Approach. And for the Reason just given, one may easily suppose, that many out of a Multitude might for the Sake of present Safety, renounce the Gospel, *none* of whose Doctrines they might disbelieve or doubt, not even that of Christ's Coming; and yet those same People may be imagined *not* to have renounced their Faith, could they have had any Assurance, that Christ would come *Time enough* to preserve them from that Danger, of which they lived in hourly Apprehension and Fear.

the

the Apostle's Dexterity and Management is extremely fine and masterly. For in the very Means, which he uses to *deter* them from such pernicious Ways, he administers the most effectual Argument to *convince* them. The Doctrine of a *future Judgment* they *believed*. On what Grounds? Upon the Authority of the *Word of Prophecy*; on the Evidence whereof the Certainty of that Doctrine depends. The then *approaching Coming of Christ* rested upon the same Word of Prophecy; why therefore, should not the same Argument have the same Effect and Influence on their Faith? The Reasoning is admirably strong and cogent; and what the Apostle may properly be supposed to have made Use of. Nay, that he *intended* to be understood to have used this double Doctrine, he himself, if I mistake not, has given us a pretty strong presumptive Proof in the 4th, 5th, and 6th Verse of the second Chapter. Where he brings three several Examples of the sad Effects and Consequences of Unrighteousness and Disobedience, to confirm his *Thesis*. Whereof, 'tis observable, the two last, *viz.* the Instance of the Antediluvian World, and that of *Sodom and Gomorrah* respect *temporal* Visitations: Whereas the first, *viz.* the Case of the *fallen Angels*, plainly implies a *spiritual* Judgment. Hence then appears the Reason, why the Apostle in his Application of these Examples, might chuse to make Use of an Expression (a) of such Latitude, as to be capable of both a temporal and spiritual Sense.

(a) Εἰς ἡμᾶς κρίσις, 2 Pet. ii. 9. This is the first Time the Expression occurs in either Epistle.

Since I have taken upon me to say so much on the Subject, I will venture to offer one more Conjecture; for it would be of some Importance towards the Confirmation of the above given Opinion, if one could find out any Vestigia of the Apostle's *Transition* from one Doctrine to the other. And there seems to me to be great Reason for imagining, that St. *Peter* intended to prepare the Reader for it by the double Expression just taken Notice of (a). But whether this be so or not, whoever considers the Tenor of St. *Peter's* Reasoning, will, I believe, see Cause for imagining, that an Expression very similar to it (b), in the 10th Verse of the 3d Chapter, is the very Hinge, upon which the Argument turns from the temporal to the spiritual Doctrine. Observe the Substance of the Verse before. From the Parenthesis therein contained, it clearly appears, that some People had complained of the Slowness of Christ's Coming. St. *Peter's* Answer to this Objection, is to this Effect: You have no Reason to conclude, that Christ is slack concerning his Promise, because you do not see any Signs of his Approach; for he himself has told us, that the Day of the Lord will come without Notice or Warning, as a Thief in the Night. (c). This he assures them, upon the Authority of our Saviour's own Word. And it is very much to the present Purpose to observe,

(a) See Note (a) on P. 40.

(b) *Ἐνῶπις* *αὐτοῦ* If it be doubted whether this Expression may be properly applied to the Destruction of Jerusalem, See Bishop Chandler's Defence of Christianity, p. 314, &c.

(c) Matt. xxiv. 42, 43.

that in the Place, from whence the Substance of this Prophecy is quoted, after having described the Diagnosticks of his *second Coming* to the Destruction of *Jerusalem* (a), and taken Occasion from thence to inculcate the Duty of Vigilance by a Parable or two (b), our Saviour immediately passes on at the 31st Verse of the next Chapter, by a Transition very similar to this of *St. Peter*, to the Description of the *last Judgment* (a).

If this last, or any of the foregoing Interpretations, wherein my Exposition stands unsupported by the concurring Suffrage of any other Commentary, should prove unsatisfactory to the Reader, I would beg Leave to remind him, that I only offer them as my *Opinion*. In the Course of the Exposition I must own, I have ventured to put a Construction upon two or three Words, uncountenanced by the Authority of any Commentator or Expositor that I know of. How well such Constructions are supported, the Reader has seen; and by his Judgment, I am intirely willing they should stand or fall. This at least I can venture to say: That as I have already within the small Sphere of my Reading, met with no Reasons sufficient to occasion in me the least Hesitation about any of them, so I am intirely prepared to retract them, as soon as ever I should see a convincing Proof of their Invalidity. Whether they are approved or rejected, it will by no Means affect the State of the Argument: I propose building no Advantages

(a) *Dr. Whitby* himself has interpreted these two Chapters in this Sense.

(b) By Way of Parenthesis, as *Dr. Hammond* observes.

upon any of them. The Reader therefore is welcome to substitute any other Construction in the Room of them, that he pleases. Without their Assistance, I presume upon having got Ground enough for my Purpose: For the only Use I shall make of this Review of the Substance and Argument of the two Epistles, will, I hope, prove apparently deducible from the Tenor of *St. Peter's* own Words; which will be to facilitate the Explanation, and bring us to the Doctrine of the Text; which I am come now more particularly to consider.

Previous to which Inquiry I will observe, that from the foregoing Review of the two Epistles, it evidently appears, that the second Epistle was written to support and maintain the Hopes and Expectations, which *St. Peter* had raised in his first. From the same Consideration therefore appears the Propriety and Expediency of recurring to the first Epistle, in Order to come at the Meaning of the Text. Which before we enter upon, let us stop a little, and sum up the Evidence, which the foregoing Survey of the Argument has afforded us.

In the first Place then, let it be recollected, what was observed from *Dr. Whisby* and *Dr. Hammond*, that the Design of the first Epistle was to encourage the dispersed Christians to persevere and continue constant in the Faith, under the Temptations and Persecutions, to which they were then subject (a). The greatest Consolation under which, was the approaching Coming of Jesus Christ; which he himself

(a) See P. 10.

had promised, should be before the Expiration of the then present Generation (*a*), and even whilst some of his Contemporaries (*b*), and particularly one of his own Disciples (*c*) should be living. Upon which Coming the Christians, (as was very natural from the Assurances they had received, See *Luke* xxi. 28.) built all their Hopes of Deliverance from the Persecution then raging (*d*). Distress is an impatient State :
And

(*a*) See *Matt.* xxiv. 34. *Mark* xiii. 30, and *Luke* xxi. 32.

(*b*) See *Luke* ix. 27.

(*c*) See *John* xxi. 22.

(*d*) It may perhaps here be ask'd in the Words of Mr. *Astton*, "What Comfort could Men, under Persecution from Roman Governors, expect to receive from the Ex-cision of the *Jews*? Men too, who, as they had been *Jews*, had probably one Prayer still in Store for the Peace of Jerusalem. In what Respect could their State be better, after that Event had taken Place? What Advantage could they expect from it? Just as much as Protestants persecuted by a Turkish Bashaw, would gain from the Destruction of the City of Rome! What Grace or Deliverance was brought to them in Fact, from that Revelation of Christ? How did the Trial of their Patience, how could it yield Honour and Glory at that Appearance of him?" See Mr. *Astton's* Dissertation, p. 121

These Embarrassments lay in the Way of our Hypothesis, and are too considerable to be passed over in Silence; as therefore the Reader will naturally expect to see them taken Notice of, I hope I may be excused the Liberty of considering and endeavouring to remove them. In Order then to clear up the first Point, the requisite Assistance is very near at Hand. For the *Acts* of the *Apostles* will go a great Way towards it, being usually supposed to contain the History of about thirty Years, which will bring us very near the Time, beyond which this 2d Epistle could not be written. Thither then let us have Recourse, for it will from thence easily be perceived, by whose Incitation the Persecutions during that Period of Time, were chiefly raised.

Very

And “ it is very natural for Men in Affliction
 “ to expect that every Day would bring their
 “ Deliverance

Very soon after our Lord's Ascension, *Acts* iv. 1—3, we find the Apostles thrown into Prison by the *Jewish* Priests, and the Captain of the Temple and the Sadducees, Chap. v. 18. they received the same Treatment again from the Hands of the High Priests and the Sadducees. Ch. viii. 1. we read of a great Persecution against the Church which was at *Jerusalem*; by which all of them, except the Apostles, were scattered abroad throughout the Regions of *Judea* and *Samaria*, and as far as *Phenice* and *Cyprus* and *Antioch*, ch. xi. 19. Ch. ix. we find *Saul* breathing out Threatnings and Slaughter, against the Disciples of the Lord, and in Order to satiate his Revenge, he went unto the High-Priest, and desired of him Letters to *Damascus* to the Synagogues, that if he found any of this Way, he might bring them bound unto *Jerusalem*. Which Thing also he did; and many of the Saints did he shut up in Prison, having received Authority from the Chief-Priests, ch. xxvi. 10. As soon as *Saul* was converted, and began to preach Christ in the Synagogue, the *Jews* turned their Rancour against him, and took Counsel to kill him: Insomuch, that the Disciples were forced to secrete him, in Order to elude their Rage. Chap. xii. 1. we read, that *Herod* the King (who was of the *Jewish* Religion) stretched forth his Hands to vex certain of the Church; and he killed *James* the Brother of *John*, with the Sword; and because he saw it pleased the *Jews*, he proceeded further to take *Peter* also. When *Paul* and *Barnabas* were at *Antioch*, we find, Ch. xiii. 48. that when the *Gentiles* heard that Salvation was to be preached unto them, they were glad, and glorified the Word of the Lord: But the *Jews* raised Persecution against *Paul* and *Barnabas*, and expelled them out of their Coasts. So again, when *Paul* was at *Lystra*, there came thither certain *Jews* from *Antioch* and *Iconium*, who persuaded the People, and having stoned *Paul*, drew him out of the City, supposing he had been dead. See likewise, Ch. xvii. 5, 13. observe also Chap. xviii. 12, 16, 17. Ch. xxi. 30, 31. Again, Ch. xxiii. when more than Forty of the *Jews* had bound themselves in a Curse, saying, That they would neither eat nor drink, till they had killed *Paul*; the chief Captain, finding no-

“ Deliverance with it. But when one Year
 “ after another passed, and no Deliverance
 “ came,”

thing in him worthy of Death, or even Bonds, rescued him and sent him to the *Roman* Governor, into better Hands. The *High-Priest*, understanding this, took the Trouble of a Journey to *Cæsarea* with the Elders and an Orator, on Purpose to accuse him before *Felix*. *Felix* on the other Hand, let him have Liberty, and ordered the Centurion to forbid none of his Acquaintance to minister or come unto him. When he left his Procuratorship indeed, he left *Paul* bound. But why was it? Because he was willing to be upon good Terms with the *Jews* upon leaving his Government, and to shew them a Pleasure. His Successor too, *Portius Festus*, willing to ingratiate himself and do the *Jews* a Pleasure, ch. xxv. 9. asked *Paul*, if he would go up to *Jerusalem* and be judged there? Why should *Paul* rather chuse to go to *Rome*? Or for what Reason did he appeal to be reserved unto the Hearing of *Augustus*? The Treatment he met with, when he came to *Rome* will explain it: For it seems he dwelt there two whole Years in his own hired House, and received all that came unto him; preaching the Kingdom of God, and teaching those Things, which concern the Lord *Jesus* with all Confidence, no Man forbidding him, Ch. xxvii. 30, 31.

Here end the Acts of the Apostles: The History closing with the 59th. or 60th Year of Christ. Through all which Period of Time, we see the Church dispersed, and the Disciples perpetually harrassed by the Malice of the *Jews*; but no considerable Molestation from the *Roman* Power: Nay, none at all indeed from any Body but the *Jews*, except the Danger *St. Paul* was in from the *Grecians*, Ch. ix. the Imprisonment of *Paul* and *Silas* at *Philippi*, Ch. xvi. and the Tumult that was raised against them by the Craftsmen at *Ephesus*, Ch. xix. No Wonder indeed, that we can find no Traces of a Persecution, which was not yet in Being. The first Persecution of Christianity from the *Roman* Quarter being well known to be raised, not till the 10th of *Nero*, and 64th of Christ. See *Duffin* and *Cave*. In the Beginning of which Persecution and in the same Year, *St. Peter* died. See *Cave's* Hist. literaria, Life of *Peter*.

The

“came,” many began to stagger in their Faith, and to suspect that the Day of his Coming

The Occasion of the Persecution was this; *Nero*, in Order to wipe off the Odium, he had incurred on Account of the Fire which he had kindled, and which had made a great Devastation in the City of *Rome*, laid it, according to *Tacitus*, to the Charge of the Christians, and made that an Handle to punish them with the most exquisite Tortures. The Pretext was, because the Christians, and especially the Apostles were well known publicly to teach, that the World was to be burnt by Fire, and that *Jerusalem* was in a little Time to be destroyed by Fire and Sword.

The Date of this 2d Epistle of *St. Peter*, is not pretended to be specified with any Degree of Certainty. But that it was written *before* the Commencement of the *Neronian* Persecution, there is the highest Probability. Especially if Their Conjecture may be allowed to have any Weight, who imagine, that the Doctrine of the Conflagration inculcated in this Epistle, might be the Occasion of his Death. *Dr. Cave's* Words upon the Occasion are much to the Purpose, and worth reciting: *Id quod secundâ suâ Epistolâ Nuper Scriptâ, Petrus noster copiosè fecerat: (nempe declamasset de conflagratione.)* Hist. lit.

We see then what Ground there is to conclude, that this 2d Epistle was written before any Persecution was raised against the Church by the *Roman* Power; and with what Reason the Persecutions it had hitherto laboured under, may be ascribed to the Incitation of the *Jews*. The Destruction of *Jerusalem* must therefore afford great Matter of Joy to the Christian Church.

To this it may be said, “that as they *had been Jews*, “they had probably *one Prayer* still in Store for the Peace “of *Jerusalem*.” See Note (d) p. 44.

I own indeed, that no People upon Earth had ever more national Prejudices, more unconquerable Attachments to their Country than the *Jews*: And I doubt not it would be with some Reluctance, that they could behold *Jerusalem* an Heap of Stones. We may depend upon it therefore, that some considerable Matter of Joy and Comfort was to accrue to the Church from this Catastrophe of the *Jewish* State, for an Apostle of Christ to propose

ing might be far off; and in Order to avoid the Rage of their Enemies, renounced the

Gospel

propose it as a Ground of Consolation to a distressed People, wherein he exhorts them to rejoice. What Advantage the Christians *in Fact* received from it, the foregoing Part of this Note may for the present be sufficient to explain. What Advantages were beforehand *expected* to accrue from it, would be a material Discovery, if we could find out. That there were many apostolical Prophecies subsisting, and strong Expectations entertained by the People about the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, is not only apparent from these Epistles of *St. Peter*, and innumerable Passages in several of *St. Paul's*, but is positively attested by *Lactantius*. See *Cave's* Hist. Lit. p. 4. That there was very good Ground for such Expectations, cannot be denied, both on Account of the Persons foretelling it, as well as the Correspondence of the Event. Our Blessed Saviour himself is very large, and very express in predicting this Event: And to his Description of the Prognosticks of it, he adds a very remarkable Exhortation in these Words: "When these Things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your Heads, for your *Redemption* draweth nigh," Luke xxi. 28. Whatever Advantages did *actually* accrue from the Event, 'tis plain the Christians had the highest Reason from our Saviour's own Words, to *expect* very great ones. And could we give no Account of any Benefits, that the Church *in Fact* enjoyed from it, I shall presume it would not be questioned, whether our Saviour's Prediction was fulfilled or not.

The Argument then stands thus: It was foretold by our Saviour, that a Redemption *should be* brought, and therefore we may conclude it *actually was* brought upon the Church by the Destruction of *Jerusalem*. We have seen that the Christians were till then under Persecutions and diverse Temptations—That the *Jews* were the chief Authors of those Persecutions till the Year of Christ 60, or 62, or thereabouts, appears from the Acts of the Apostles—That the Continuance of them till the Writing of *St. Peter's* 2d Epistle, could not come from the *Romans*, is plain, because the *first* Persecution from the *Roman* Power did not happen, till after this 2d Epistle was written. There is the greatest Reason then to imagine, that the Persecutions, under which the Christians laboured, when *St.*

Peter

Gospel, and denied the Lord that bought them. Of which Disposition the ignominious Sufferings

Peter address'd his 2d Epistle to them, were brought upon them by the *Jews*. The Excision therefore of the *Jewish* Power was in such Case indisputably a proper Motive of Consolation for the Apostle to propose, in Order to keep wavering Disciples stedfast in the Faith; as the Excision of that Power would for the future prevent any considerable Molestation or Opposition from that Quarter.

Thus stands the Argument upon the Chronology of Dr. *Cave*; and I will not take upon me to offer any Thing in Support of Dr. *Cave*'s Authority. I am apprized however, that Chronologists are far from being agreed upon this, as they are from establishing any other Computation. The Commencement of the *Neronian* Persecution is indeed pretty well agreed upon by most of them, and may with a competent Degree of Assurance be fixed, according to *Tacitus*, with the Consent both of *Cave* and *Dupin*, in the Consulship of *Lecanius Bassus*, and *Licinius Crassus* in the Year 64. *Cave* places the Death of *Peter* in the same Year; *Dupin* in the Year following. *Isaacson* differs from them both; placing the first Persecution in 65; the Writing of the 2d Epistle of St. *Peter* in 67, and his Death in 68.

Thus I have brought into View the various Reckonings, and leave it to the Reader's Option, to prefer which of them soever appears most plausible, or best supported. If the Computation of Dr. *Cave* finds Credit, the Argument advanced above, seems to be almost conclusive in Favour of the Hypothesis here offered. If the other Authors are followed, they can however at most prove nothing against it.

In what I have hitherto said, I have confined myself to the *second* Epistle, but the Reader will please to take Notice, that the whole Controversy in Reality depends upon the Date of the *First*. And however dubious the Date of the *Latter* may be, the *Former* was undoubtedly written many Years before the first Persecution. *Dupin* fixes it by Conjecture in the Year 45. But it is generally allowed to have been written in the Reign of *Claudius*: And *Claudius* died in 54.

If there are any who may not think the Point sufficiently clear from what has been said, it may be of Use to attend to the following Argument.

For

Sufferings and Death of Christ, might probably not a little contribute to the Confirmation; For
from

For (whether it were *before* or *after* the Writing of the 2d Epistle, it at present matters not; but) there certainly arose from the Quarter of *Rome*, the cruellest Persecution the Church had ever yet faced, which began in the 10th of *Nero*, and 64th of Christ, and ended with the Death of *Nero* in 68. *Jerusalem* was taken in the Year 70, in the 2d of *Vespasian*. Through all whose Reign, as well as the succeeding one of *Titus*, Persecution slept. If therefore, the Excision of *Jerusalem* be not allowed to have brought any Rest to the Christian Church, in Respect of *itself*, yet it happened at a Period of Time, which was productive of great Happiness to the Church: As it coincided with an *Era*, from whence Christianity dated a long Series of profound Rest; no Persecution stirring from the Death of *Nero* till the 9th according to *Cave*, or according to *Dupin* the 15th, or 16th of *Domitian*, and 95th of Christ.

Upon the whole then. Either as the *Jewish* Power was *then* extinguished, or as the *Neronian* Persecution was at that Time stopped; in *one* Sense or *other* (if it be not allowed in *both*) the Destruction of *Jerusalem* cannot be denied to have been a proper Motive of Consolation, for the Apostle to propose to the distressed Christians.

There seems indeed to *want* no other Proof of the Point; but there is another Argument still behind, and that not less material, than the Considerations already offered. It is this: *Christianity* was to be built upon the Ruins and Abolition of *Judaism*. It surely therefore must be a Matter of great Consolation to the Christians, as well as a strong Confirmation of their Faith, to see the City and Temple of the *Jews* abolished, and therewith their *ecclesiastical*, as well as what Remains subsisted of their *civil* Policy, brought to a perpetual End. What could more strengthen an unstable, *judaizing* Church, not thoroughly weaned from their Attachments to the *Law*, than to see a final Period put to the *Mosaic* Oeconomy? To see the Altar destroyed, and "not one Stone of the Temple left upon another?" What could more effectually confirm the Faith of the then Infant and scarce-settled State of Christianity, than for them to see the Prediction of their
Lord

from the latter Part of the 11th Verse of the 1st Chapter, it is plain, that this very Thing had created in some of them a Diffidence of his Glory and Power to deliver them out of their Distresses

Lord and Master, so literally fulfilled, so signally verified? What could administer more Consolation to the dejected, persecuted, and, some of them perhaps wavering Disciples of Christ, than to receive so comfortable an Assurance, that the crucified Jesus was both Lord and Christ; and therefore, that they had not believed in vain? What could more effectually raise their drooping Spirits, banish their Fears, encourage their Confidence? What could make them more perfect, better establish, strengthen, settle them?

In Order to repell the remaining Objections above cited from Mr. *Alston*, I hope it may be thought sufficient to quote the following Period or two from Dr. *Cave*. For, speaking of the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, he says, "The Christians, being timely warned by the Caution which our Lord had given them, that when they should see *Jerusalem* compassed with Armies, and the Abomination of Desolation (*i. e.* the *Roman Army*) standing in the holy Place, they should then flee into the Mountains, betook themselves to some obscure Place of Refuge; and having been lately commanded by a particular Revelation, communicated to some pious and good Men among them (which, says *Epiphanius*, was done by the Ministry of an Angel) to leave *Jerusalem* and go to *Pella*, they universally withdrew themselves, and seasonably retreated thither, as to a little *Zion* from the Flames of *Sodom*, and so not one perished in the common Ruin.—And God, 'tis like, on Purpose directed the Christians thither, that they might be out of the Reach of the Beesom of Destruction, that was to sweep away the *Jews* wherever it came. Nor was it a less remarkable Instance of the Care and Tenderness of the Divine Providence over them, that when *Cestius Gallus* had besieg'd *Jerusalem*, on a sudden he should unexpectedly break up the Siege, at once giving them Warning of their Danger, and an Opportunity to escape." See *Cave's Life of Simon*, p. 65. Compare with Note (c) p. 13.

Distresses (a). This Prejudice the Apostle endeavours to remove by an Argument from *Prophecy*; putting them in Mind, that those very Prophecies of the Old Testament, that foretold his *Sufferings*, which they had *already* seen accomplished, testified also of the *Glory* that should follow them; which therefore, they had the strongest Reason to imagine would certainly be fulfilled. His Reason for it is this; and a very good one it is. Because, the Spirit of God had owned itself the Author of these Prophecies, by having, in Part, already concurred in their Accomplishment.

As therefore Christ had *partly* fulfilled those Prophecies, and *suffered* according to the Scriptures, why should they despair of his receiving that *Glory* and *Power*, which was *equally* predicted, and which, according to those Predictions was to *follow* his Sufferings? Especially as those Prophecies were now *reiterated* and *re-enforced* by the Preachers of the Gospel, who acted by the Commission of the same Holy Ghost, that inspired the Prophets who first *delivered* the Predictions. His Meaning is plainly to confirm the Validity of the prophetick Evidence, to establish a Connection and Correspondence between the Old and New Covenant, and to put the inspired Men under both Dispensations upon the same Foot of Authority. The obvious Consequence of which was, That therefore the Prediction of our Saviour's then *expected Coming*, resting upon the united Evidence of both Testaments, stood

(a) See Note (b) on p. 11.

(b) See Note (a) on p. 11. upon

upon as sure a Foot of Certainty, as those Predictions that were *already fulfilled* (a).

Thus stands the Reasoning of the *first* Epistle, which has opened an easy Passage to the Meaning of the Text under Consideration. Thither therefore, let us now carry our Inquiry.

In Order to do it with Success, I apprehend it may be of great Use to recollect, that the primary Design of St. *Peter's* Writing, was the *Consolation of the distressed Disciples*. The *Medium* he makes Use of in Order to effect that End, was the Consideration of Christ's *Power and Coming*. The Support of which *Medium*, he rested in his *first* Epistle, intirely upon the Word of *Prophecy*. But as there is Reason to believe, that this Doctrine had not met with the desired Reception, the Apostle in this *second* Epistle, sets himself more particularly to confirm, strengthen, and re-enforce it. Upon which Subject, he plainly enters at the 16th Verse. "For, says he, we have not followed cunningly devised Fables, when we made known unto you the Power and Coming of Christ." And then immediately proceeds to back this Assertion by unexceptionably *proving* the Truth of what he had said. And as there were some Scruples entertained about Christ's *Power*, he very properly sets out with

(a) How little Truth then is there in the Observation of Dr. M. Examin. p. 7. "That Prophecy not fulfilled, carries with it no Evidence at all, nor is an Event in Futurity capable of being ascertained by any!" For, if so, where is the Proof of a *future Judgment*? Where the Evidence for eternal *Rewards and Punishments*? For, if no Event in Futurity is capable of being ascertained by any Evidence, then truly is our Preaching vain, and our Faith is also vain.

a pre-

a *preliminary Proof* of that *Doctrine*. Which Proof was the Attestation of a *Miracle*: For he assures them, that he himself had actually seen Christ invested with *Glory*, and heard him by a Voice from Heaven pronounced to be the *Son of God*. This miraculous Evidence not only gave a general *Authority*, and bespoke an Attention to every Thing he should *deliver*, but was at the same Time an incontestable Proof of his *Divinity* and *Power* (a). This must be allowed to have been Matter of *some* Consolation to the drooping and dejected Hope of the Disciples, as it afforded them a comfortable Ground of *Presumption* and *Expectation* of Assistance from him.

But besides this *Presumption* deducible from the Proof of his Power, the Apostle proceeds to put them in Mind of a *better* Argument and *farther* Security for their Confidence, viz. the *Word of Prophecy*; which improved that *Presumption* into a *Certainty*.

The Reason both of the *Comparison*, and of the *Preference* founded thereupon, is obvious. For the *Miracle* only assured them, that he *could* redress their Grievances, and consequently (as was just now observed) could only give them a *Presumption* of Assistance: But the *Word of Prophecy* afforded them a much *stronger* and *surer* Ground of Consolation, because Christ had actually *promised* (b), and therefore

(a) See p. 49, 50, and 51. and Note (b) on p. 11.

(b) By himself and his Prophets: That St. Peter here meant to include the *Apostles*, may with great Probability be collected from 2 Ep. iii. and latter Part of the 15th Verse; where he takes Notice, that St. Paul's Doctrine was

fore certainly *would* come to their Relief. And who can doubt that the *Promise* of Christ, *super-added* to the Proof of his *Power* and *Authority*, was a *stronger* and *surer* Argument for the Apostle's Purpose, than the Proof of his *Power* and *Authority only*?

As this is a much disputed Passage, I will endeavour to comprize this Exposition of it, in the few following Questions and their Answers. If then it be asked, *What* it is, which is here said to be *surer*? The Apostle himself answers, *The Word of Prophecy*. If—*Concerning what*? Concerning the *Coming of Christ*. If—*surer than what*? Than the *Miracle in the Mount*. If—*why*? Because it afforded a *certain* Argument, where the Miracle only afforded a *Presumption*. If—*For what Purpose*? I answer, For what Purpose can it be supposed the Apostle should declare it *surer*, but for Support of the Purpose, for which they were *both* introduced? i. e. *as Motives of Hope and Consolation to the distressed Christians*.

Upon the Whole, the Position which I take to be here advanced by the Apostle, is to this Effect: That the Word of Prophecy concerning the Coming of Christ *expressly* built upon the miraculous Attestation of his *Power* and *Authority*, as well as *tacitly* and *virtually* upon

was to the same Purpose. And in Confirmation of what is here observed, see 2 Ep. i. 16. WE made known, &c. See also Note (b) p. 14. But if any Body thinks the Prophets of the *Old Testament* are here included, I have no Objection to it, as it does not at all weaken, but strengthen the Apostle's Argument.

That the Prophecies of *Christ himself* are here alluded to, I think will plainly appear from Note (a) P. 23. and 2 Ep. iii. 9.

all

all the *other* Miracles of the Gospel, was a stronger and surer (a) Argument for the Confidence

(a) As Mr. *Astton* has laid some Difficulties in the Way of this Hypothesis, by endeavouring to invalidate the *Bishop of London's* Scheme, I imagine they may be expected to be here taken into Consideration. Which I shall with much greater Pleasure do, because, as Mr. *Astton* has very handsomely and sufficiently justified the Liberty of dissenting from abler Writers than one's self, I shall presume to beg the Protection of the same Apology, and to crave its Umbrage, whilst I offer a few Reasons in Support of that Opinion which this ingenious Author has rejected, with the same Hopes of escaping, and the same Intentions of avoiding all Occasion of Offence.

In the first Place, every Argument which Mr. *Astton* has urged against the Hypothesis advanced by the *Bishop of London*, seems to me to confirm the very Point, which *His Lordship* intended to prove, and has clearly evinced; viz. That Prophecy cannot be a better Evidence than Miracles, because it owes its whole Authority and Sanction to them. Which *His Lordship* has well explained by the Instances of *Gideon* and *Moses*: And has particularly shewn, that *St. Peter* could in this Place make no such Comparison.

Yet after all which the Bishop has said upon that Subject, Mr. *Astton* concludes his Argument against *His Lordship* in this Manner: After having shewn, against Mr. *Collins*, that " Prophecy, when fulfilled, is neither in the Nature of the Thing a better Evidence for any Truth than Miracles, nor was ever alledged by Christ as being so;" He adds this Conclusion against his *Lordship's* Scheme. " From these it seems equally clear, that Prophecy, before it is accomplish'd, cannot admit of any such Comparison: And therefore, I think it is a most reasonable Inference, that *St. Peter* never did compare Prophecy to Miracles, as a Proof which he preferred in either of these Views," p. 103.

Whatever Profession, or Appearance of Opposition there may be, thus far his *Lordship* and Mr. *Astton* certainly agree. But the *Bishop* proceeds to shew farther, that altho' *St. Peter* prefers not Prophecy to Miracles in general, yet he certainly prefers Prophecy, as a surer Argument for

fidence and Consolation of the Disciples; than the Miracle in the Mount, which proved his Power

for the Purpose he had in View, than the *particular Miracle* in the Mount. And I do not see, that Mr. *Astton* has proved any Thing to the Contrary.

In the Recapitulation of his Argument, p. 107. He indeed sums it up against the several Authors, that stand in the Way of his Hypothesis, in these Words: "We have before shewn that Prophecy could not be compared by the Apostle, and considered as preferable in Point of Proof to the Miracles of the *Transfiguration* and *divine Voice*, because it is not in *itself*, a better Evidence, &c."

But this is certainly a very different Conclusion from the last quoted from P. 103, without one *intermediate* Argument to alter its Nature: Nor indeed have I seen in any preceding Part of the Dissertation, one Argument offered in Support of it. But, however, we have a Reason here given, why Prophecy cannot be preferred to the Miracles of the *Transfiguration* and the *divine Voice*, "because it is not in *itself* a better Evidence." If the Author hereby means, as the Meaning seems to be, that *unaccomplished* Prophecy without any *other Credentials*, is not a better Evidence than these Miracles in the Mount, I believe nobody will dispute it, nor do I know any one, who has asserted that it is. If indeed, I myself do not misunderstand Mr. *Astton's* Reasoning, (I would be understood to speak it with all Deference) he very widely mistakes the *Bishop of London's* Meaning. For the Tendency of his whole Argument against *His Lordship*, seems directed to prove, as I said before, "that there can be no Ground for comparing and preferring Prophecy to Miracles." See p. 96, 97, 98, 102, and 103. and even urges the Case of *Gideon* and *Moses* against the *Bishop's* Hypothesis, which his *Lordship* has well employed in Support of it.

In short, from the Nature of Mr. *Astton's* Argument in many Places, one would suppose, that his *Lordship* had advanced this Doctrine, "That *unaccomplished* Prophecy was a better Argument for the future Coming of Christ than Miracles." This I conclude, as from many other Places, so particularly from the following Passage. "All the Weight, however, that a Prophecy, not yet fulfilled,

Power and Authority *only*. Unto which Word of Prophecy therefore, he well advises them to

“ can have in determining any Thing, must arise from
 “ the Assurance we have that it is a Declaration of God,
 “ and as there can be no better Way of coming at that Assurance than by *Miracles*, a Prophecy before it is accomplished, can never be put in Competition with
 “ Miracles in Point of Evidence ; because, that would
 “ be to compare it with the very Thing from whence it
 “ draws the strongest Conviction it can possibly give. Of
 “ this the Bishop himself is so thoroughly convinced,
 “ that I cannot express what I have to say upon it, so
 “ well as in his own Words.” Then follows a Quotation from p. 4, 5, 6, and 7. of the Discourses. *Dissert.* p. 96.

Which Quotations from the Discourses Mr. *Astton* seems to produce, as presumed Inconsistencies in his Lordship's Scheme. And upon the Strength of these supposed Advantages, gained out of the Bishop's own Mouth, proceeds to argue, that there can be no *Preference* due to the Word of Prophecy over the *Miracle* in the Mount, considered as Evidences for the future Coming of Christ. A Preference, which the Scheme here offered, obliges me to maintain and defend : *Not*, because I suppose that the *Miracle* and the Word of Prophecy are here produced “ to ascertain the Futurity of the same Thing, *viz.* Christ's Coming ;” But for *this Reason* ; because, as I imagine that the *Promise* of Christ's Coming was a surer Ground of Hope, than the *Presumption* arising from the Proof of his *Power* ; I am in Consequence thereof obliged to maintain, that the Word of Prophecy was either a *Proof* of his future Coming, of which the *Miracle* was *no Proof at all*, or at least, that Prophecy was a *better Proof* of it than the *Miracle*. The Reason of this Obligation lying upon my Hands, is plain ; because, if the *Miracle* was as good a Proof of Christ's Coming as the Prophecy, then Prophecy could not be said to afford a surer Ground of Hope on that Account, than the *Miracle* ; which is Part of the Hypothesis here maintained.

In the Support of which, however, so far is there from being any Necessity to suppose, that the *Miracle* and Prophecy were brought to ascertain the Futurity of Christ's Coming, that

to attend, and steer the Course of their Lives by it, as a Light shining in a dark Place; untill

that I imagine the *Preference* given to the latter is sufficiently accounted for, by supposing the Miracle neither brought to prove it, nor to be capable of proving it. For, as the learned *Author* of the *Discourses* has observed, the Miracle could possibly shew no more towards that Purpose, than "that Christ had *himself* been glorified;" And whatever Presumption might be entertained thereupon, yet the Word of *Prophecy* alone could shew, "that he would *return again* in that Glory and Power." *Dis. p. 21.* As this is the obvious, so it seems to be the true Reason, of the comparative Preference here ascribed to Prophecy over the Miracle in the Mount. But this by the by.

The Point in Question and now to be determined, is this; "Whether was the *Word of Prophecy* (so circumstanced, as it stands proposed to the Consideration of the Christians in St. *Peter's* Argument) or the *Miracle* (or Miracles) in the Mount, a better Proof of Christ's future Coming?" This is the Point to be proved.

Here are two Arguments then for the Proof of a Proposition, standing in Competition. Whilst they are both urged in *Conjunction*, the Proposition is unexceptionably established. The Way therefore to weigh the comparative Validity of each Argument, is to try, which will better support the Proposition *without the other's Aid*. And if *one* appears to be a sufficient Proof of it, without the Assistance of the other, and the *other* appears to be *without its Assistance*, no Proof at all; but more especially, if *one* appears to be *essential* to the Proof of it, and the *other* not at all so, the Issue must be conclusive.

Let us then in the first Place, for the Sake of Argument, draw a Veil over the *Word of Prophecy*, and suppose it out of the Question; and the *Miracle in the Mount* left to support the Doctrine of Christ's future Coming, *without its Assistance*. But I see not how the Argument can be stated, with any Possibility of inducing such a Conclusion, as the future Coming of Christ: For, neither the Miracle in the Mount, nor all the other Evidence of the Gospel, exclusive of Prophecy, can possibly evince any such Thing.

ON THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST

till the Time should come, that the Accomplishment thereof should be made manifest, when all

On the other Hand, let us in its Turn, suppose the *Miracle in the Mount* out of the Question; and see how the Word of *Prophecy* will prove the Coming of Christ, *without its Aid*. The only Question the Case admits, is, whether the Christians, to whom this Argument from Prophecy was addressed, could have sufficient Assurance, *without* the Miracle in the Mount, that this Prophecy was the *Word of God*. If they had, their Assurance was built upon a Rock. That they had *not*, I believe no-body will assert. For though *this* Evidence be removed, yet God will be found not to have left himself without Witness. This, I apprehend, may be thought a sufficient Key to this Author's Reasoning, p. 98, 102, and 143.

These Considerations oblige me to take the Liberty of saying, that there seems to me to be a Fallacy in Mr. *Ashton's* Way of expressing himself, p. 92, and 93. "Supposing, says he, not allowing, for the present, both these Things to be as they are stated by the Bishop, it seems to be impossible, in the Nature of the Thing, that St. *Peter* could compare any Prophecy of Christ, not yet fulfilled, and prefer it as a Proof of any Thing, even of the very Event of which it is a Prophecy, to a Miracle wrought in Support of the Expectation of that Event, for this plain Reason; that an unaccomplished Prophecy, by whomsoever delivered, can only claim Admission as an Evidence, upon the Strength of its being the Word of God; and you can have no greater Assurance possibly of its being the Word of God, than from a Miracle." If I mistake not, the same Thing is again observable, p. 101, and 102. Where the Objector is supposed to ask, "how the Declaration of Christ, that he will raise us at any future Time, is shewn to be the Word of God?" In Answer to this, Mr. *Ashton* says, "You can shew that by no stronger Argument than the Miracle of his Resurrection. Why then, continues he, do you tell me, that the Prophecy is a stronger Evidence than the very Miracle, without which it would be an empty Sound! To this I know no Answer. A Prophecy not fulfilled cannot be said to be a better Argument than a Miracle for any Thing, because

all the Difficulties about this Doctrine would be made as clear as Day-light. In the two last Verses, he concludes his Argument with this binding *Entbymem*; which seems in a Manner to sum up the whole of his Reasoning, and which he desires them particularly to consider, " That no Prophecy of the Scriptures is at
 " any Time the Result of any Man's own
 " Suggestion,

" because it is no Argument for any Thing without a
 " Miracle."

In which Passages, as I apprehend, instead of *greater Assurance*, p. 93 line 2, and *stronger Argument*, p. 101. lin. 23. the Reasoning requires it to be *other Assurance* and *other Argument*. And instead of *a Miracle*, p. 93 lin. 4, and p. 102. line 8. it should be *the Miracle*, supposed in each Case to be set in Competition with Prophecy. Or, as Mr. *Ashton* has expressed himself to the same Purpose; p. 98, " Because whatever is to be learnt from the Prophecy," (speaking of Christ Coming) " must terminate ultimately, as to the Truth of it, in *the Miracle*," (*viz.* of the Glorification.) And again, p. 99. " You receive your *Information*, it is true, from the Prophecy; but the whole *Credit* of that Information must rest upon *the Miracle*." Here the Reason is in both Places *logical*, but certainly is not *true*: Because it makes the whole Authority of Prophecy depend upon the Miracle in the Mount, which I imagine will not be attempted to be maintained.

From the whole then, I conclude, that the Word of Prophecy (so circumstanced, as it stands proposed to the Consideration of the *Jewish Converts* in St. *Peter's* Argument) was a better Proof of Christ's future Coming, than the Miracle or Miracles in the Mount.

It may be observed, that in stating this Argument, I have all along kept it *divested* of any Authority and Sanction it might receive from the *Miracle* in the Mount; from which I had no Occasion, but for the Sake of Argument, to have *excluded* it. The real Question being, Whether Prophecy, so circumstanced as it was at that Time proposed by St. *Peter*, (*i. e.* resting upon the Authority of *this*, as well as all the *other* Miracles wrought in Support of the Gospel) did not afford a surer Ground of Hope and Confidence, than this Miracle only?

“ Suggestion, but is always directed by the
 “ Inspiration of the Holy Ghost.” Leaving
 them to supply the deficient Proposition, which
 must be to this Purpose, “ Therefore it may
 “ be depended on, that the Prophecy of
 “ Christ’s approaching *Coming* will inevitably
 “ be fulfilled.”

The chief Substance of what may be deduced from this State of *St. Peter’s* Argument, I will, by Way of Recapitulation, range under the following Corollaries:

1st. From what has been said, it appears, that the *Design* of *St. Peter’s* first Writing, was the *Comfort* and *Consolation* of the distressed Disciples.

2^{dly}. That the Apostle endeavoured to raise and confirm this Assurance by the Consideration of the *Power* and *Coming* of Christ, appears not only from the Tenor of the said Epistle, but it is likewise plain from the express Testimony of the Apostle himself in his second Letter, *Chap. i. Ver. 16.* that this was the Doctrine he had inculcated in his former Epistle.

3^{dly}. It appears likewise farther, from the Tenor of the first Epistle, that *St. Peter* had therein rested the Proof of this Point upon the Testimony of the Word of *Prophecy*.

4^{thly}. It is plain, that this Doctrine had not met with the desired Reception, but had either been mistaken, misapplied, or perverted; because it cannot be supposed, that the Apostle would have written a second Epistle to assure them, that he had *not* used cunningly-devised Fables

Fables in Regard to any Doctrine, if no-body had *objected* it to him. For,

5thly, It appears from the Apostle's own Words, (2 Ep. iii. 2.) that the Design of the *second* Epistle was the same as the *first*. From hence therefore, as well as from the general Tenor of the Epistle, it appears,

6thly, That the *Power* and *Coming* of Christ was the Doctrine of the *second*, as well as the first Epistle. (See Dr. M's Exam. p. 74.) Which Doctrine, as it is plain, it had been traduced or misapplied, as delivered in his first Letter, the Apostle in this second, sets himself more directly to prove. And as the *Power* of Christ had been in some Measure called in Question, on Account of the Meanness of his Death, it being at the same Time introductory and preparatory to the Confirmation of his *Coming*, he very properly begins with proving that first: And his Proof of it is incontestably built upon the Attestation of a *Miracle*. The Way to his main Design being thus cleared, and the *Authority* of Christ thereby maintained, it consequentially followed, that Christ *could* relieve his Servants out of their Afflictions. Thus having vindicated the Attribute of Christ's *Power*, by an Argument too, which gave a general *Sanction* to any *Promises* he should make (as is well observed by Mr. Ashon, p. 134.) and having thereby fixed the Foundation for the Sequel of his Proposition to be built on (a), St.

(a) And it may be added, a Foundation very proper to the Purpose on all Accounts, but *peculiarly* so, supposing the Word of *Prophecy* which follows to be the Declaration of *Christ himself*.

Peter

Peter proceeds a Step farther, and draws another Argument *a fortiori*, from the Topick of his *Veracity*. Telling them, that besides this *Presumption* of Assistance, deducible from the Proof of his *Power*, the Confidence and Hope he had been recommending, was founded upon a *surer* and *more certain* Basis, the Word of *Prophecy*. For that the Apostles and Prophets, and above all, Jesus Christ himself (all inspired by the Holy Ghost) had given their infallible *Promise*, that he *would* come to relieve them.

7thly, That the *Coming* of Christ here spoken of, *immediately* refers to his *second* Coming to the Destruction of *Jerusalem*: And that, if it alludes to his *final* Coming at the Day of *Judgment*, it must be in a *secondary* and not *exclusive* Sense. See Mr. *Ashton's* Dissertation, p. 117, &c.

8thly, As it now appears, that the Miracle in the Mount was *originally* "*wrought to ascertain the Futurity of Christ's Coming,*" (Mr. *Ashton*, p. 92.) and as it is evident from what has been said, that it was not employed for that Use by the *Author of this Epistle*; so, I apprehend, it is equally evident from the *Discourses*, that the *Bishop of London* does not *suppose* St. *Peter* to have applied it to that Purpose (a): It being an Argument of such a Nature,

(a) His *Lordship's* Scheme is to this Effect: That the Point to be proved, is the Power and Coming, or the Coming of Christ with Power, (Dis. p. 18, and 20.) And that on the Proof of this Point, were founded all the Hopes he endeavoured to encourage. P. 15. The *Thing to be effected*, was the Establishment of these Hopes: The *Topick* he used for this Purpose, was the *Coming of Christ*
with

Nature, as to be incapable of affording any such Proof. What it proves is the *Authority*, and *Power* of Christ: The *Power* of Christ is the Basis upon which his *Promises* rest; his *Authority*, the Ground on which their *Credibility* depends. As such therefore, the *Proof* of this Authority and Power, was a very proper Foundation for an Argument to rely upon, in Favour of his *promised Coming*. As far then as

with *Power*. As there were some Scruples entertained about the *Power* of Christ, the Apostle very properly begins his Argument with a preliminary *Proof* of this Article. Which necessarily must be supposed to administer *some* Hope and Comfort to the wavering Minds of the *Disciples*, as it would afford them a comfortable Expectation of Assistance from him.

But so far is his Lordship from intimating that this Miracle was originally wrought, or here applied to *ascertain* the Futurity of Christ's Coming to their Relief, that He expressly says, "this Evidence manifestly extends but to *one* Part of the Point in Question, *viz.* to shew that Christ had *himself* been glorified: But to shew that he would *return* again in this Glory and Power," his Lordship supposes not only *this* but all *other* Arguments to be *insufficient*; and that the *only* Evidence capable of ascertaining this future Event, was the *Word of God*. Dis. p. 22. How then can the same Author be imagined to suppose, that the Miracle and Prophecy were both brought to ascertain the Futurity of the same Event?

How *His Lordship's* Scheme is commonly understood, it would be a difficult Task for me to collect: And if I thought the Generality of Readers understood it in the Sense represented by Mr. *Ashton*, I should be somewhat tender in dissenting from the Opinion of the World, on a Subject which the Generality of Mankind may be supposed to have carefully considered. But as far as I can judge of the Author's Meaning from the Discourses themselves, I am satisfied the Opinion here advanced, is perfectly compatible and coincident with *His Lordship's* Exposition: As it seems to me to be in every Respect agreeable to the *Apostle's* Purpose, and the natural Sense of the Passage.

this

this Miracle was a Proof of his *Power* and *Authority*, so far was it *introductory*, and no farther *accessary* to the Proof of his *Coming*. See Mr. *Ashton's* Diff. p. 91, 92.

9thly, I from hence conclude, that, altho' between the Evidence of *Prophecy* and that of *Miracles*, there is no Comparison at all made; yet between the Word of *Prophecy*, and the particular *Miracle* in the *Mount*, there is; and the Preference plainly given to the former. See Mr. *Ashton's* Diff. p. 107. But

10thly, Although the Preference is here given to the Word of *Prophecy*, and affirmed by St. *Peter* to be a better Argument for his Purpose, than the *Miracle in the Mount*, yet such Preference affords no Colour for arguing from this Text, that *Prophecy* is a better Evidence *in general* than *Miracles*; or that it is a stronger Argument for *all* Purposes, even than this *particular* Miracle: Because it may so happen, that a miraculous Attestation of the Truth of *one* Doctrine may be *introductory* to the Support of any Purpose, and yet that Purpose may be capable of receiving a *stronger* Support from a Topick, absolutely and *in itself*, even of *less* Validity than such miraculous Attestation: As the one may be only a *presumptive*, the other a *direct* Argument in the Case. See Dr. *M's* Exam. p. 57, 58. Nay,

11thly, So far is St. *Peter* in either of these Epistles, from setting up the Argument from *Prophecy* in Preference to the Evidence of *Miracles*, that, if I mistake not, these very Epistles afford the strongest Proof, that St. *Peter* was of the quite *contrary* Persuasion. Look through

through the first Epistle, you will find the *Power* of Christ intirely resting upon the Word of *Prophecy*. But in his second *Letter*, which was intended as a *Vindication* of his first, and designed to strengthen and confirm the *Doctrines* therein contained, he then enforces it with the *Attestation* of a *Miracle*; which therefore he certainly thought a *stronger Confirmation* of it: Else doubtless he would not have changed his *Medium*, but would have kept on pressing the more convincing *Argument*. The *Coming* of Christ indeed, he continues to urge upon the *Evidence* of *Prophecy*. What can be supposed, to have been the *Occasion* of this *Difference* of *Measures*? Because, without Doubt, the *Power* of Christ he imagined was more firmly established by the *Miracle*, than by the Word of *Prophecy*: But the *Coming* of Christ, being an *Event* in *Futurity*, was therefore incapable of such miraculous *Proof*, and “could have no surer *Evidence* than *Prophecy*.” See Dr. M’s Exam. p. 58, 60, and 77.

12thly, I conclude, that both Epistles were so far from being addressed to those that doubted of the whole, which the Apostles had been preaching to them concerning *all* the *Doctrines* and *Facts* of the *Gospel*; that it does not appear they disbelieved even the particular *Doctrine* of Christ’s *Coming*; for they might only be unwilling to incur the *Danger* of *Persecution* in the mean Time, on the *Presumption* and *Expectation* of Christ’s approaching *Coming*, because they did not know at what *Distance* it might be. See Dr. M’s Exam. p. 74 and 77.

APPENDIX:

APPENDIX.

AS I have lately met with some new Observations upon the Construction of this Passage, I will beg Leave to draw out a short Sketch of the State of the Argument, as above advanced, with a View thereto.

The Miracle in the Mount then I presume to have been proposed by St. *Peter*, as an indisputable Proof of Christ's *Power* to relieve his Servants. And when the Character and Disposition of our Saviour were consider'd, I imagine this would inspire his Church with a very strong *Presumption*, that he would not suffer his faithful Disciples to be trodden down by their Enemies. But this was not all. The Apostle leaves not their persecuted Faith to rest upon the dubious Ground of a bare *Probability*, but proceeds to shew farther, not only that Christ had *Power* to redress their Grievances, but also, that he would certainly come and *exert* that Power for their Relief. For, continues he, besides this *Probability* arising from the Proof of his *Power*, we have the Word of *Prophecy* for
our

our Security, which is a much *surer* Argument for our Confidence, and upon which we may *more firmly depend*; I do not mean, that it is to be more firmly depended upon in Respect of its own *Validity*, or that "it rests upon "a more *sure Foundation* for my own *Belief*," (or indeed any one's else) "than that illustrious "Miracle which I saw with my own Eyes;" (Mr. Cooke's Ser. p. 30.) but that it affords a *surer* Ground of Consolation, because it shews the *Certainty* of that Deliverance, for which the Miracle in the Mount afforded only a *Presumption*.

The only Question in the Case, as is observed by a late judicious Writer, is, whether this Interpretation be agreeable to the true Meaning of the Word *βεβαιότερον*. *Βέβαιος* is rendered by Scapula, *Is de quo fiducia concipitur, is de quo nobis aliquid certò persuademus*. Budæus, Tusanus and Constantinus likewise render it in the same Sense, *viz. de quo fidusiam habemus*. And the Construction above offered, seems to be nearly the same, with that of *Thucydides* there quoted; *βεβαιότεροι ἂν ἦσαν μὴδὲν νεωτερίειν, majore Securitate consideremus eos nihil rerum novarum molituros*.

These Authorities seem sufficient to shew, that the Word *βεβαιος* does not always signify the *Ground* and *Foundation*, whereupon the Subject to which it is annexed, does *itself* rest; but that it sometimes means the *Ground*, which such Subject *affords* for some *other Purpose*.

I should be very glad, if this Construction of the Word should appear sufficiently supported

ported and justifiable to the abovementioned learned and candid Author of the Sermon on this Text, lately published; but which I had the Unhappiness not to see till after these Papers were gone to the Press.

I cannot however help taking the Liberty to question, whether the Word of Prophecy, such as it was offered by St. Peter to the Consideration of the Jewish Converts, was capable of being made *βεβαιότερος* in the Sense contended for by this Author (i. e. *more assured, better grounded, or re-established*) either by the *Miracle in the Mount*, or by any other Miracle, than it was before. For, I think it must be allowed, the *Word of Prophecy* was unquestionably known, and infallibly evinced to be the *Word of God*, before the Miracle in the Mount was wrought.

But to carry the Argument still farther: If *βέβαιος* be confined to signify the *Ground and Foundation* on which any Thing rests, I apprehend the Comparatives *more or less sure* cannot, in that Light, be upon any Account applicable to divine Prophecy. Because the *only proper Ground and Foundation*, whereon Prophecy can be said to depend, is the *Knowledge and Veracity of God*: Miracles, or any other external Sanction being by no Means the real *Ground*, on which Prophecy *itself* rests, or in the least essential to it, but, only the *Credentials and Recommendations* of it to *Us*. In this Light therefore, *more or less sure* are Terms of Comparison, absolutely *incompatible* with Prophecy. For, as the divine Knowledge and Veracity are
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unsusceptible of any Degrees of *magis* and
minus, so, no farther than Prophecy is in the
bighest Degree *sure* and *well-grounded*, can it
be the Word of God.

F I N I S.



[17]
and people of my tribes of men and
women, no matter how many is in the
world, there are and will grow, can it
be the Word of God.

THE END



